A Pedagogical and Performance Analysis of Francis Poulenc's Works for Two Pianos and Four Hands

By

Mai Li
M.M., University of Cincinnati, College Conservatory of Music, 2016
B.M., Xinghai Conservatory of Music in Guangzhou, China, 2012

Submitted to the graduate degree program in the School of Music and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts.

_____

Chair: Dr. Jack Winerock

_____

Dr. Steven Spooner

_____

Dr. Michael Kirkendoll

_____

Dr. Colin Roust

_____

Prof. Tim Hossler

Date Defended: 17 December 2019

The DMA document committee for Mai Li certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

A Pedagogical and Performance Analysis of Francis Poulenc's Works for Two Pianos and Four Hands

Chairperson: Dr. Jack Winerock

Date Approved: 17 December 2019

Abstract

Francis Poulenc's piano duo music has not received the same detailed scrutiny as the solo piano music, even though this relatively small body of repertoire (just five pieces in total) is quite valuable. Its emotional scope ranges from the farcical comedy found in the *Capriccio* and *Sonata for Four Hands* to the utmost seriousness of the *Sonata for Two Pianos*. The music is both approachable by children (*L'embarquement pour Cythère*) and understandable only by those possessing good musical taste (*Élégie*). It is technically varied, full of harmonic interest and thematic beauty, readily received by audiences.

This document will seek to show why the literature is important for Poulenc researchers in a study of his life and art. These works span the length of his career, with the earliest work written in 1918 and the last work in 1959 nearly four years before his death, providing valuable insight into the evolution of his compositional styles. It will further delve into specific stylistic aspects of Poulenc's music. Finally, it will provide collaborative and performance practice considerations of the repertoire and will give specific and detailed analyses of each of the pieces.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Examples

Introduction

Throughout the entirety of his career and into modern times, Francis Jean Marcel Poulenc (1899-1963) has been regarded unfairly as a superficial composer. While his piano works do not achieve the artistic seriousness of the great German or French compositions,[1] Poulenc's compositional style (writing smaller works with simplicity and conciseness held as an ideal) was intentionally directed against the romantic visions of grandness and heroism found deeply rooted in German music of the nineteenth century, something which may have contributed to this sense of superficiality. It is due to a prevailing negativity towards Poulenc's piano repertoire that much of his music is neglected in concert halls. In a conversation with Claude Rostand, Poulenc stated, "I think in all honesty that my piano music is neither as good as pianists claim, nor as bad as some of your fellow critics have said."[2] This document will seek to bring more attention to the piano duo repertoire, to look into it with detail in order to remove the stigma of superficiality where appropriate (such as with the *Sonata for Two Pianos* and the *Élégie for Two Pianos*) and to present it as music worthy of study and performance.

Though several dissertations and theses have been written concerning Poulenc's piano music since his death in 1963,[3] the scope of these papers tends to focus on the solo piano music, sometimes briefly overviewing the piano duo literature but without describing the pedagogical or performance considerations associated with this music. They contain valuable theoretical analyses of the solo music but are lacking in serious analyses of the two-piano repertoire, oftentimes merely describing the form of a piece and striking musical peculiarities.

---

[1] See Beethoven's colossal oeuvre of thirty-two piano sonatas or Debussy's sets of *Études* and *Préludes*.

[2] Nicolas Southon and Roger Nichols, *Francis Poulenc: Articles and Interviews: Notes from the Heart* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 193.

[3] Dissertations by Jon Ray Nelson, Keith Daniel, Renny Sie, Elizabeth Ann Laufers, etc.

Poulenc's complete repertoire for piano duo consists of two sonatas (*Sonata for Two Pianos* and *Sonata for Four Hands*) and three stand-alone works. Some of these pieces, along with the *Concerto for Two Pianos*, have remained in the repertory of virtuosos, from celebrated piano duo Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale to Martha Argerich and other contemporary pianists; however, most of the works are far from mainstream. Poulenc's relatively small number of compositions for this instrumentation lopsidedly span almost the entire length of his professional career[4] and are effective in showing the growth in his musicianship and craft.

This document will be looking at each work of this repertoire from the vantage point of a pianist and a performer. It will delve deeper into the two-piano works of Poulenc through a short biography of the composer, an overview of applicable stylistic considerations, and a detailed pedagogical and performance analysis of this unique body of repertoire.

[4] The first two piano, four-hand piece was written in 1918, with the other four pieces written in the 1950s.

Short Biography

In Paris on January 7, 1899, Francis Poulenc was born the second child and only son to parents Émile Poulenc and Jenny Royer. His father, Émile, was a partial owner and director of the *Rhône-Poulenc* drug company that operated in Paris. In addition to his practicality, he had a great love of music and a deeply devout Catholic faith, both sources of inspiration for his young son. Poulenc stated that "My father… had, without bigotry, superb religious belief."[5] Despite his apparent disregard for literature and painting, Émile retained a love of the music Beethoven, Berlioz, and Cesar Franck.[6] Although Poulenc never himself loved these particular composers, Émile's general love of music was certainly passed on to his only son.[7] Poulenc's mother, Jenny Royer, had an even greater impact on the young Poulenc; as an amateur though accomplished pianist, she introduced him to the music of Mozart, Debussy, and the other classics. Throughout his life, Mozart steadfastly remained his favorite composer, with Debussy at a close second (due to the experience at the age of eight of hearing Debussy's *Danses sacrée et profane* for harp and string orchestra).[8] By the age of five, Poulenc had started lessons on the piano with his mother. He later credited his mother's side of the family as being the artistic side of his family that was passed down to him. Contrary to his father, his mother's family was not religious:[9] even from youth, Poulenc's dual personality, that of "ragamuffin" and "monk," can be seen in his parents' differing relationship with religion.[10]

When Poulenc was eleven years old, he underwent a musical transformation on hearing

---

[5] Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and His Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977), 21.

[6] Bernac, Francis Poulenc: The Man and His Songs, 21.

[7] Jon Nelson, "The Piano Music of Francis Poulenc" (dissertation, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1978), https://search-proquest-com.www2.lib.ku.edu/docview/288282652/?pq-origsite=primo, 1-2.

[8] Nelson, "The Piano Music of Francis Poulenc," 1-2.

[9] Bernac, 21.

[10] Ibid., 36.

parts of Franz Schubert's song cycle, *Die Winterreise*. This experience stirred in Poulenc the desire to sing professionally — though this dream did not last long after the age of fourteen, the importance of melody in his music could have started from this early desire.[11]

After a short period of piano study with an assistant to pianist Cécile Boutet de Monvel, a relative of French composer César Franck,[12] Poulenc at age fourteen began studying with the teacher who would be most influential in his life, the Spanish pianist Ricardo Viñes. In speaking about Viñes in a conversation with Claude Rostand, Poulenc stated succinctly, "I owe him everything."[13] Poulenc's statement is undeniably true, as his musical and technical foundations were formed and strengthened through Viñes's teaching; in addition, Poulenc's important musical connections with lifelong friend Georges Auric (another important member of *Les Six*), mentor Erik Satie,[14] and composer Manuel de Falla were all started in some manner by Viñes.[15] During this time, Poulenc was also able to make the personal acquaintance of some of his favorite modern poets, such as Guillaume Apollinaire, Max Jacob, and Paul Éluard.[16] These poets became the inspiration for the majority of Poulenc's song literature.

After the death of his parents (his mother in 1915 and his father shortly after in 1917) and his enlistment in the army, Poulenc gave his first public debut in 1917 as a composer with the *Rapsodie nègre*, Poulenc both playing at the piano and singing while accompanied by a motley instrumentation of flute, clarinet, and string quartet. This work was such a success that Russian composer Igor Stravinsky came to Poulenc's aid in publishing the work at London's Chester

---

[11] Nelson, 4.
[12] Southon and Nichols, 191-194.
[13] Ibid., 191.
[14] Nelson, 5.
[15] Myriam Chimènes and Roger Nichols, "Francis Poulenc," *Grove Music Online*, January 20, 2001, https://doi-org.www2.lib.ku.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.22202.
[16] Nelson, v.

Music Publishing House.[17] In addition, a few years later, the great founder of the Ballets Russes and a frequent collaborator with Stravinsky, Serge Diaghilev, took note of Poulenc's successes and helped him in his first large-scale composition, the ballet *Les biches* (a piece distinct from Poulenc's typically short pieces, lasting around thirty minutes), written during 1923 and premiered in 1924.[18]

The 1920s were an important decade in Poulenc's musical life, as he along with five other contemporary French composers (Georges Auric, Darius Milhaud, Arthur Honegger, Germaine Tailleferre, and Louis Durey) were christened as "*les Six Français*" by music critic Henri Collet in 1920.[19] This new musical group, *Les Six*, found its artistic vision in writer and poet Jean Cocteau's views on music, consisting partly as a reaction against German music and "Debussyism." The group's professed hatred of music deemed derivative of Debussy's[20] possibly originated from the taste of Erik Satie, whose musical ideas were promoted by Cocteau; this part of the aesthetic had no personal bearing on Poulenc however, who as he himself said, "could not do without [Debussy's] music."[21] Each of the composers of *Les Six* retained their different musical voices. Although they were informed by Satie's musical tastes, Satie had made it clear that there was to be no "School of Satie," but that each composer's art should be individual.[22] Throughout its short existence, *Les Six* only infrequently collaborated in compositional projects and fell apart after 1921.

From 1922 to 1924, Poulenc studied counterpoint with Charles Koechlin. This work with

---

[17] Elizabeth Laufers, "Francis Poulenc's Use of Counterpoint in Chamber and Piano Music, 1917–1925" (dissertation, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2004), https://search-proquest-com.www2.lib.ku.edu/docview/305160230/?pq-origsite=primo, 8.

[18] Nelson, 10, 21.

[19] Laufers, 11.

[20] Colin Roust, *Georges Auric: A Life in Music and Politics* (New York: Oxford, 2020), 56–57.

[21] Bernac, 24.

[22] Daniel Weiser, "The Visual Stimulus: The Influence of the Visual Arts on the Musical Compositions of Emmanuel Chabrier, Erik Satie, and Francis Poulenc" (dissertation, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1998), https://search-proquest-com.www2.lib.ku.edu/docview/304466381/?pq-origsite=primo, 39.

Koechlin, particularly in harmonization of J. S. Bach's chorale tunes, exerted great influence in his compositional style: in early compositions, heavy reliance was placed on ostinati and repeated gestures (as seen clearly in the *Rapsodie nègre*, *Piano Sonata for Four Hands*, and the *Mouvements perpétuels*) while following this period of study, Poulenc broadened his musical vocabulary beyond these simplistic techniques.[23] In addition, Poulenc's unaccompanied choral works show the effect that these harmonization exercises had on his treatment of melody and harmony.[24]

In general, for the decade after World War I (1918–1928), an atmosphere of jubilation predominated in France, as the largest war yet in human history had finally come to an end. People clung to a hopeful outlook, believing naively that this war was the "War that will end war."[25] This optimism and the resultant growth of artistic fervor in Paris, no matter how misguided, led to a similar optimism and energy in Poulenc's musical aesthetic that stayed with him for the rest of his life.[26]

In 1934, Poulenc began collaborating with baritone Pierre Bernac, forming a duo that would last for twenty-five years and that would be a source of inspiration for Poulenc, producing roughly two thirds of the art songs and *mélodies* that he composed.[27] Though the solo piano was an important mode of expression for Poulenc (which spanned compositionally the years of 1918-1940), the *mélodies*, opera, choral, and chamber music gradually took precedence.[28] Though Poulenc knew that he was no longer a part of the avant-garde after the heyday of *Les Six*,[29] he

---

[23] Laufers, 16.
[24] Nelson, 10.
[25] This common phrase about World War I perhaps originated from the title of H. G. Well's book, *The War That Will End War*, written as a compilation of articles in 1914.
[26] Bernac, 25.
[27] Ibid., 13, 27.
[28] Nelson, 103.
[29] Ibid., 281.

felt that his *mélodies* were pianistically the most innovative of his compositions.[30]

In 1936, Poulenc had a religious awakening to the Catholic faith while on a pilgrimage to Rocamadour following the death of his childhood friend and composer Pierre-Octave Ferroud. From this moment on, the contrast between the sacred and the secular portions of Poulenc's nature became increasingly more evident. The *Litanies à la Vierge noire* (written directly after this experience) was his first sacred composition, with many more to follow, including the *Stabat mater* and the *Mass in G Major*. Despite this, the secular and sometimes *risqué* nature of Poulenc was never quelled, writing works like *Les mamelles de Tirésias* (translating to "The breasts of Tirésias") or the *Chansons gaillardes*.

Poulenc began his first concert tour of the United States in 1948. These tours would continue until 1960 as he concertized with Pierre Bernac and soprano Denise Duval.[31] According to Bernac, though Poulenc disliked traveling in general, going to the US was said to "amuse him."[32]

In his final years, Poulenc composed mostly chamber music including his flute, oboe, and clarinet *Sonatas* along with his *Élégie for Two Pianos* and several other pieces.[33] At the age of sixty-four, on January 30, 1963, Poulenc died suddenly of a heart attack without leaving behind any works that were unfinished.[34]

---

[30] Nelson, 284-285.
[31] Chimènes and Nichols, "Francis Poulenc."
[32] Bernac, 31.
[33] Nelson, 17.
[34] Bernac, 29.

Compositional Style and Influences

Poulenc's compositional style is distinctive, even though his harmonic language is undeniably tonal and neoclassical. He viewed himself as a modern Mozart or Schubert, his music staying firmly in the musical tastes of the time it was composed yet retaining as individual voice apart from other composers. As with all artists, it is difficult to neatly divide Poulenc's compositional output into clear categories and periods. Though some authors have attempted this, the result is dating that frequently conflicts. Keith Daniel offers perhaps the most compelling and wholistic view of period distinctions, and it is worth investigating the four periods he defined.

"Fauve" Period: 1917-1922

This first "Fauve" period emphasizes the influence of Satie and *Les Six*, as Poulenc explored music within the ideals expressed by Cocteau.[35] French music critic Claude Rostand said that out of all the composers in *Les Six*, Poulenc was most aligned with Satie's aesthetic of musical "simplicity and clarity" as well as its anti-German tendency.[36] Some important piano pieces from this period would include the *Mouvements perpétuels* and the *Sonata for Four Hands*, both of which have Satie's influence (notice the modalism, transparency, and folk-like quality of the second movement of the *Sonata for Four Hands*) in addition to early influence from Stravinsky (heard in the barbarism of the first movement of the *Sonata for Four Hands* resembling that of

---

[35] A movement in the visual arts known as Fauvism (lasting roughly from 1905-1907) relates to this early period in Poulenc's life. The leading artists of this movement (first Henri Matisse and later Raoul Dufy) were given the nickname "les fauves" or "wild beasts" due to the shock that their art produced in the viewers of that time. Simplification, sometimes quite extreme, and striking colors are both aspects of the Fauvist's style. See John Elderfield, *The "wild beasts": Fauvism and its Affinities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 13.

[36] Keith Daniel, "Francis Poulenc: A Study of His Artistic Development and His Musical Style" (dissertation, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1980), https://search-proquest-com.www2.lib.ku.edu/docview/288052219?pq-origsite=primo, 187.

Le Sacre du printemps; also, the first movement of *Mouvements perpétuels* contains bitonality that is reminiscent of Stravinsky).

Neoclassic Period: 1923-1935

Daniel calls this period the "Stravinsky or neo-classic Period" as Stravinsky produced a profound effect on Poulenc as he found his voice apart from the earlier "Fauve" Period.[37] His compositions frequently borrow from Stravinsky's compositions such as *Mavra* or *Pulcinella* and also become more compositionally diverse, with less of an emphasis on ostinati and repeated gestures (so common in the early period's works like *Mouvements perpétuels*). It is during these years that Poulenc started venturing into large-scale works like *Les biches* (1924), *Concert champêtre* (1927-1928), and *Aubade* (1929).[38] As he explored neoclassicism, he composed works like the *Suite Français* (1935), a work looking back to the old suites of Couperin and Rameau, though Poulenc's characteristics still clearly show. The *Concerto for Two Pianos* (1936) has clear ties to Mozart's piano concertos, including an embellished musical quote of Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21 in C major, K. 467 in the second movement. His C*hansons gaillardes* (1926) revisit the French chansons of the sixteenth century and the music of Monteverdi.[39]

Neo-Baroque Period: 1936-1952

This period had a further influence by Monteverdi (perhaps reintroduced to him by Nadia Boulanger and her choir who performed a number of Monteverdi's motets in concerts attended by Poulenc[40]— he cites this as part of his inspiration for the *Sept chansons* written in 1936),

---

[37] Daniel, 191.
[38] Ibid., 187-188.
[39] Ibid., 189.
[40] Southon and Nichols, 228-229.

Bach, the French harpsichordists (brought to his attention by Wanda Landowska: Poulenc said of her, "My meeting with Landowska was indeed a vital occurrence in my career… It was she who provided me with the key to Bach's harpsichord music. It was she who taught me all I know about our French harpsichordists."),[41] and the composer Tomás Luis de Vitoria.[42] Coinciding with this period was the start of Pierre Bernac's close association with Poulenc and the composition of many *mélodies*. Finally, the year of 1936 coincided with Poulenc's religious conversion at Rocamadour that resulted in his affiliation with sacred music.[43] Throughout this entire period, lyricism became more important and romanticism was more detectable, despite Poulenc having cut ties with German romanticism as a part of *Les Six*. Present in the music is more rubato, metrical shifts, and sincere emotional outpouring. It can be said that, in this period, Poulenc found the distinguishing aspects of his style, no longer simply copying Stravinsky or Satie.[44]

"Serious works" Period: 1953-1963

This final period related by Keith Daniel pertains to Poulenc's emphasis on serious works towards the end of his life — a focus on "sacred choral works, a few gentle songs and piano pieces, serene chamber works, and two operas."[45] This distinction separating the third and fourth period is disputed by Elizabeth Laufers, who believes that such a distinction is unnecessary especially given the stasis of Poulenc's stylistic features at this point in his life.[46]

In addition, Daniel makes a separate category of three "piano periods": the first (1916-

---

[41] Ibid., 215.
[42] Daniel, 191.
[43] Ibid., 191.
[44] Ibid., 192-193.
[45] Ibid., 193.
[46] Laufers, 20.

1921) showing the great influence of *Les Six* and Satie (1922-1937), the second containing a mixture of superficial works and masterpieces such as the *Huit nocturnes* and *Improvisations* all of which show a technical mastery, and the third (1940-1959) centered on lyricism and less on virtuosity.[47] Laufers however again critiques Daniel's separate timeline for "piano periods," arguing that these periods can easily fit into the more generalized stylistic periods.[48]

Claude Rostand viewed the periods in Poulenc's compositional style in the following way:

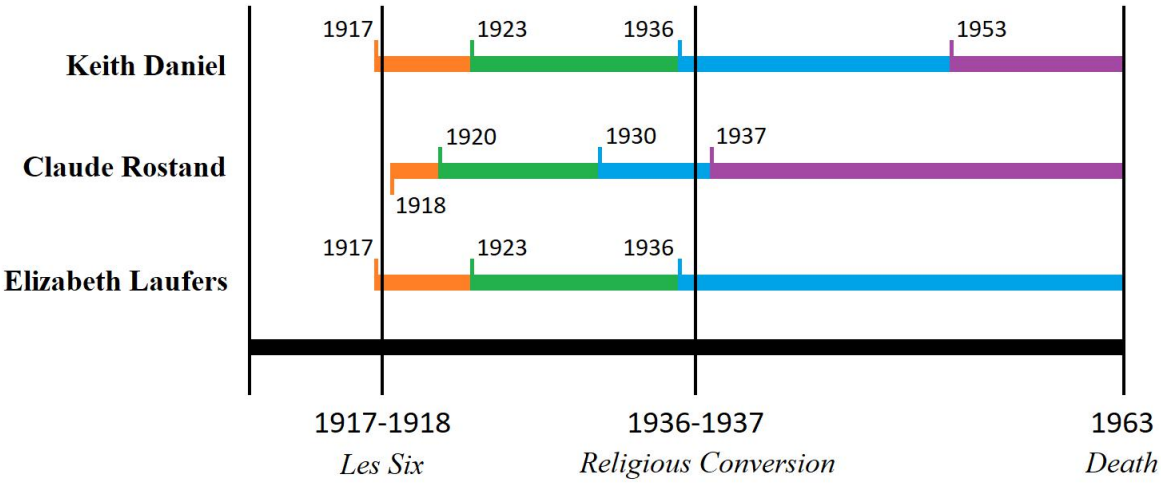
> One can without too much trouble distinguish many manners, many periods in the work of Poulenc: the wild (*fauve*), between 1918-1920; a period where the technique establishes itself, between 1920-1930; a new period where Poulenc rejected completely all aggressive awkwardness for more or less affectiveness [sic], between 1930-1937; to end up finally, toward 1937, at the last period 'characterized by a complete mastery of the means of expression in the domains of the greatest diversity'. One ought to equally note that these successive periods connect harmoniously. [49]

It is interesting to note that all three writers placed important structural emphasis on the birth of *Les Six* and Poulenc's religious conversion at Rocamadour in their timelines of his style, with a deviation of merely one year (see Figure 1). Rostand inserts an additional period separating the 1920s and 1930s while Daniel breaks down the final decade of Poulenc's life as a separate period.

---

[47] Daniel, 318.
[48] Laufers, 36.
[49] Nelson, 289.

Figure 1 – Poulenc's Compositional Periods



Influence of Composers

"I shall never minimize these influences, not wishing to be the son of an unknown father." [50]
– F. Poulenc

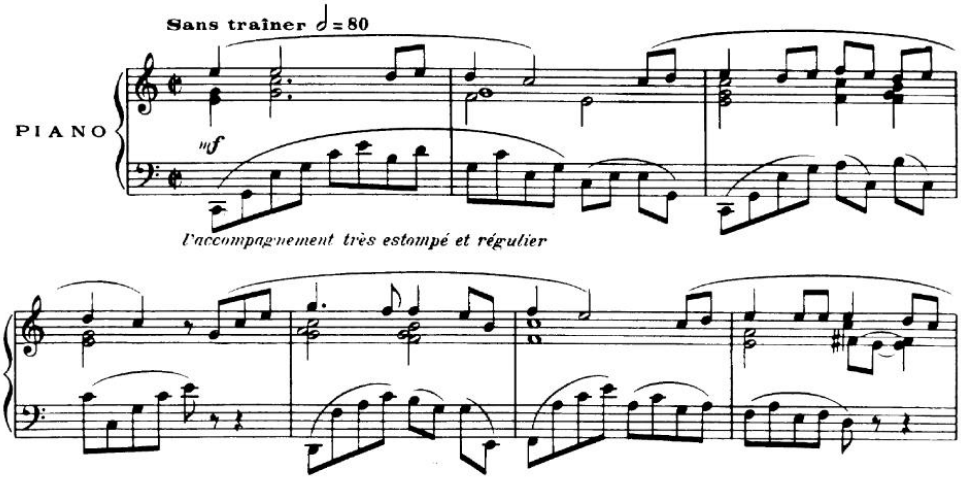
We have already seen partially what influence Satie and Stravinsky had on Poulenc. Poulenc stated in one of his interviews with Claude Rostand that, "The influence of Satie on me was considerable, as much spiritually as musically, … his music, for me, is one of the great, dear treasures of all music."[51] This influence of Satie's aesthetic can be described through his own words on the subject: "I want to realize in music what Puvis de Chavannes has succeeded in doing in painting, notably to attain extreme simplification in art. To say in two words what a Spanish orator could only express in long eloquent phrases."[52] Indeed, Poulenc's frequent brevity,[53] tendency towards diatonic melodies,[54] and a certain impertinence in his music were influenced by Satie. The *Mouvements perpétuels* are considered by Jon Nelson to be "freely

[50] Bernac, 35.
[51] Nelson, 22.
[52] Weiser, 38.
[53] Daniel, 135.
[54] Ibid., 143.

Satie"[55] and the *Valse-improvisation sur le nom de Bach* (which was written as a contribution to the *Revue Musicale* as an homage to Bach) was denounced by its critics for its irreverence in its treatment of the B-A-C-H theme, an irreverence that sprang from Satie's aesthetic. Music critic Jean Roy said of this *Valse* that "it was rather an absurd idea to ask Poulenc to write an Hommage to J. S. Bach."[56] Poulenc was a great writer of melodies, from which the diatonicism and modalism can be seen as influenced by Satie and Stravinsky: two great examples of these can be found in his solo piano music, in the long melodies in the first of his *Trois Novelettes* (right hand melody remains diatonic for 26 measures before the first chromaticism) and the first nocturne from the *Huit nocturnes* (right hand remains diatonic for 19 measures before the first chromaticism).

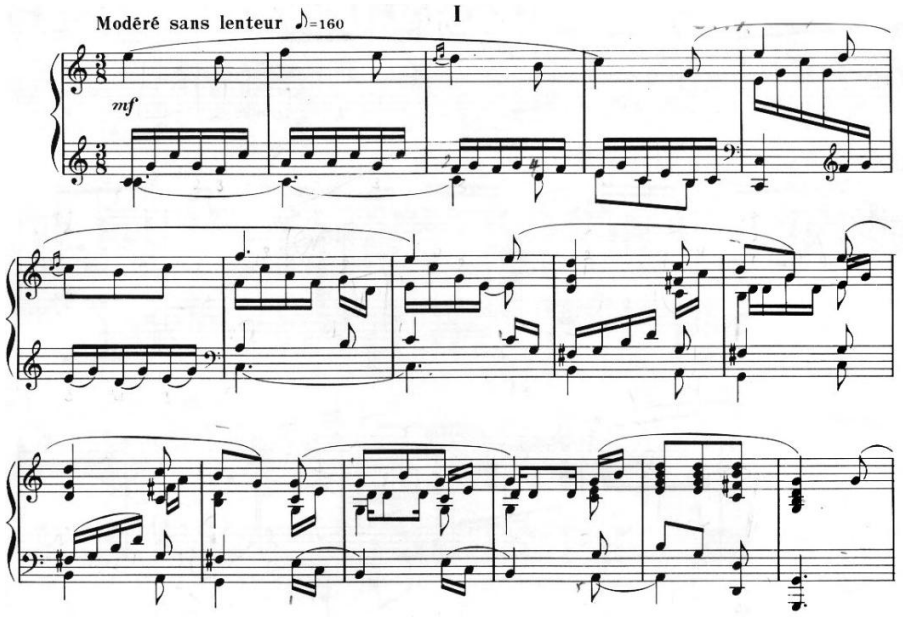
Example 1 – Diatonicism in Poulenc's Melodies

First Nocturne in C major from *Huit nocturnes* (mm. 1-7)



[55] Nelson, 26.
[56] Ibid., 72.

First Novelette in C major from *Trois Novelettes* (mm. 1-16)



A lesser-known composer that was of great influence on Poulenc was the French romantic composer Emmanuel Chabrier (1841-1894). Erik Satie held great admiration for Chabrier's music, due perhaps to a shared anti-German sentiment, a dislike of grand notions about music, and sequences of ninths and sevenths left unresolved:[57] all of this can be seen in Poulenc's treatment of musical themes and unresolved dissonances. In addition, Chabrier's love for painting is another important link with Poulenc.[58] In 1961, towards the end of his life, Poulenc wrote a short book on the composer titled *Emmanuel Chabrier*, in which he states that "together with Fauré, Debussy, Ravel and Satie, Chabrier represents whatever is best in French music since 1880."[59] Chabrier's influence can even be seen in the titles of miscellaneous Poulenc works modeled after the titles found in Chabrier's *Cinq pièces posthumes* for piano (including a "Ronde champêtre," "Aubade," "Ballabille," "Caprice," and "Feuillet d'album" respectively).[60] A wonderful example of the connection between Chabrier and Poulenc can be found in the sixth

[57] Weiser, 36.
[58] Francis Poulenc, *Emmanuel Chabrier*, trans. Cynthia Jolly (London: Dennis Dobson, 1981), 17.
[59] Poulenc, *Emmanuel Chabrier*, 12.
[60] Nelson, 23-24.

movement of Chabrier's *Pièces pittoresques* called "Idylle." Poulenc wrote of this piece, "Even today it makes me tremble with emotion to think of the resultant miracle; a whole universe of harmony suddenly opened up before me, and my music has never forgotten that first kiss."[61] This piece's transparency and relative simplicity, containing little counterpoint with an almost modal melody (seeming to begin in the Phrygian mode) set over a light texture, modified ternary form, and its use of repetition and ostinati mirror Poulenc's own musical style. The harmonies are far from a romantic style and resemble a medieval sense of modal harmony.

Art and Aesthetics

French musicians such as Chabrier, Satie, Debussy, Ravel and many more were frequently inspired by other art forms and this was certainly also the case for Francis Poulenc. Poulenc noticed this in Chabrier's music, writing, "To me it seems beyond doubt that Chabrier's taste for bold tonal relationships resulted from his love for the Impressionist painters, because the music demonstrates an undeniable affinity with some of the pictures."[62] Throughout his career, Satie made many professional and social relationships with artists, absorbing their aesthetics (including Puvis de Chavannes' simplicity in composition and color as well as the cubist painters and their avant-garde views on perspective) and transferring them into his music.[63] Satie's collaboration with cubist painter Pablo Picasso and French poet Jean Cocteau on the ballet *Parade* exerted great influence on Poulenc, who called it "a landmark in the history of art" and said that the music was "so simple, so bare, so ingenuously clever, like a picture by the Douanier Rousseau."[64] Poulenc's knowledge of the relationship of the visual arts to the music of Satie and

---

[61] Weiser, 94.
[62] Poulenc, *Emmanuel Chabrier*, 66.
[63] Weiser, 84.
[64] Ibid., 93.

Chabrier shows how attuned Poulenc was to the connections between painters and musicians, connections that he himself made with art. Written as a series of tributes to French painters and set to poems by Paul Eluard, Poulenc's *Le travail du peintre* shows how deeply Poulenc felt the relationship between poet, artist, and music.[65] He writes of this song cycle, "I thought it might revive my songs to *paint musically*, [Pablo] Picasso, [Marc] Chagall, [Georges] Braque, [Juan] Gris, [Paul] Klee, [Joan] Mirò, [Jacques] Villon."[66] The two artists that seemed to have the strongest influence on Poulenc were Henri Matisse and Raoul Dufy.

Henri Matisse was a French painter and one of the leading proponents of fauvism in art. His paintings related a search for simplicity, purity, and balance through a removal of the non-essentials as well as emphasizing color's ability to create distinction without the necessity of lines. As such, the essentiality of a Matisse work makes it such that nothing can be added or removed without disrupting its balance of elements. Poulenc's music reflects these qualities in its transparency of texture, simplicity in form, melodies that are inseparable from their harmonies as well as straightforwardness in tempo and dynamics.[67] Poulenc, in talking about his song cycle *La fraîcheur et le fen*, states,

> The piano part here is extremely economical. I thought once again of Matisse. Each note, each breath is important. That is why the timing of the pauses between the songs is not left to chance. The metronomic speeds are implacable.[68]

In addition, an exhibition by Matisse of a swan with increasingly simpler paintings using fewer lines to create the same effect was inspirational in Poulenc's compositional process:

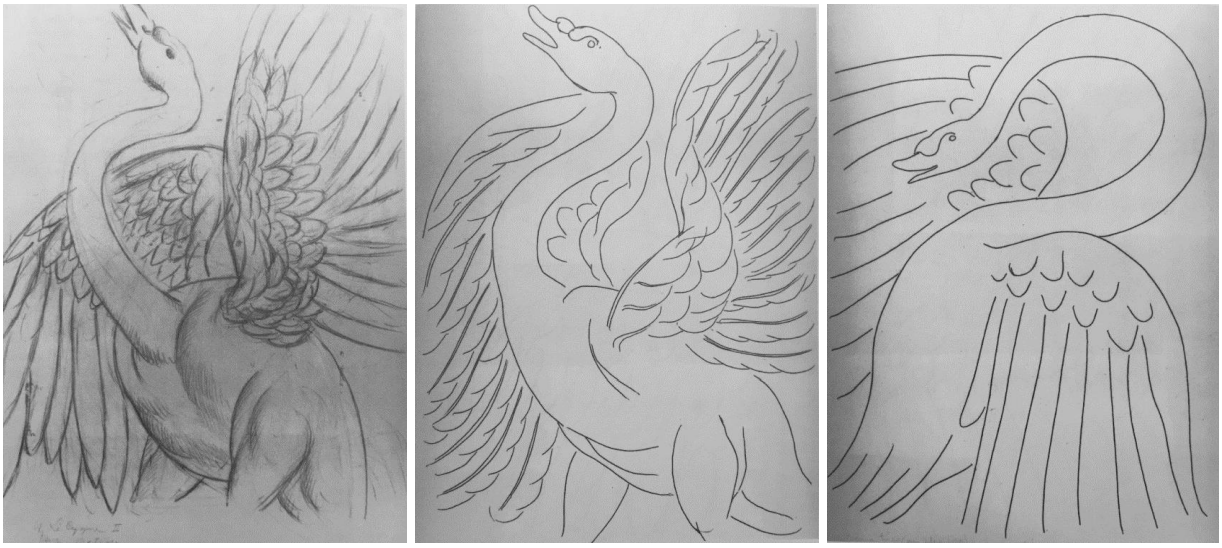
> I cannot express to what extent the exhibition of drawings by Matisse, for Mallarmé's poems, impressed me some years ago. One saw there the same subject, in particular a swan, in three or four stages of development, progressing through greater complexity, greater density (drawn in charcoal or crayon), to the most ideally simple and pure stroke

---

[65] Ibid., 85.
[66] Bernac, 116.
[67] Weiser, 96-99.
[68] Ibid., 98-99.

> of a pen. I have often sought, especially in the piano part of my songs, to take account of this lesson. If you knew how complex originally the first draft was of such songs as 'Le Pont', 'Fagnes de Wallonie', and above all 'La Fraîcheur et le Fen'.[69]

Figure 2 – Henri Matisse: *The Swan* Exhibition



Three sketches in pencil from more complex drafts to the final illustration.[70]

Raoul Dufy's art is best characterized as containing a pure, child-like optimism using bright "harmonic" colors (Dufy saw deep connection between tonal sonority and pigment).[71] His attention to form and clarity while retaining the very sensuous and human aspect of the painting is also in Poulenc's style. In one of his interviews with Claude Rostand, Poulenc notes partly what Dufy's appeal was to him:

> Anyway, if you want to get an impression of those banks of the Marne you've often heard me talk about, you only have to look at the paintings and watercolours Dufy made of them. When I see them, my heart races. It is, in a wonderfully condensed and organised form, my whole childhood paradise.[72]

Poulenc said that the song cycle *Le bestiaire*, composed after a set of thirty of Apollinaire's poems (*Le bestiaire ou Cortège d'Orphée*), had a particular influence from the Dufy woodcuts

---

[69] Bernac, 43.

[70] Images of the artwork retrieved from: Myriam Chimènes and Sidney Buckland, *Francis Poulenc: Music, Art, and Literature* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1999), 202-206.

[71] Weiser, 100-101.

[72] Southon and Nichols, 271.

that were bound along with the poetry.[73]

Compositional Technique

Poulenc's compositional technique in its use of form, harmonies, melodies, and rhythm had its roots in early influences and can be considered neoclassical in general. His period of study with Charles Koechlin (the study of counterpoint and harmonization of Bach chorales), in his own words, "fascinated me and had a decisive influence on me."[74] Koechlin's views on counterpoint were not traditional and held musicality and melodic line in supremacy over other rules, such as the resolution of the seventh and the prohibition on parallel fifths; he dismissed fourth leaps, and preparation of ninths.[75] This quickness to dispense with the traditional rules of eighteenth-century counterpoint in favor of musical ideas is quickly noticeable in the few times that Poulenc engaged in contrapuntal writing (Laufers provides an interesting contrapuntal analysis of Poulenc's *Sonata for Horn, Trumpet, and Trombone*),[76] as Poulenc can by no means be considered a contrapuntal composer.[77]

In a formal analysis, Poulenc's pieces tend to fall into simplistic forms, mostly ternary in the instrumental music, also rondo form or another more freely composed form based around a variety of themes. His music eschews development of themes throughout the form and uses repetition to create structure.[78] None of his instrumental sonatas (nor any of his other works) utilizes sonata-allegro form,[79] opting instead for forms that avoid a strong sense of thematic or harmonic development (the first movement of Beethoven's *Eroica Symphony* is a wonderful

---

[73] Benjamin Ivry, *Francis Poulenc* (London: Phaidon, 1996), 29.
[74] Francis Poulenc, *Moi Et Mes Amis (My Friends and Myself)*, trans. James Harding (London: Dennis Dobson, 1963), 35.
[75] Laufers, 48, 55.
[76] Ibid., 48.
[77] Daniel, 140.
[78] Ibid., 135-136.
[79] Ibid., 145-135.

example of German thematic development and organic unity, ideas that Poulenc resisted). In creating larger works, Poulenc often utilizes a series of shorter movements to make up the whole, such as with his *Huit nocturnes* for solo piano or his *Stabat Mater* for soprano, choir, and orchestra. Keith Daniel observes what he described as "cellular" structures in Poulenc's instrumental music: short (typically one or two measures long) motives that repeat immediately (whether transposed or repeated literally) and move onto a new theme or motive. These structures, antithetical to organicism, are independent and are not typically found as parts of other thematic material, serving only to move the music to the next idea.[80]

Harmonically, Poulenc was not innovative, staying mostly within the diatonic, tonal system established by his predecessors. His frequent free juxtaposition of "opposing" or dissonant harmonies with more traditional harmonies is difficult to analyze in any developmental way (as would be done with Beethoven or late romantics such as Liszt), as harmonies tend to be attached almost indistinguishably to melodies. As such, any sense of narrative does not come through harmonic means, but rather through a presentation of sequences of musical ideas, which do not necessarily occur organically from one idea to the next. Modality is frequent in his music, with occasional instances of bitonality that can be traced back to Stravinsky's and Satie's influences.

In addition, his works are not rhythmically experimental and remain firmly in tradition. Certain recurring rhythmic "motives" can be found in a variety of his pieces (*Les soirées de Nazelles* third movement which also has an integral connection to the first movement of Poulenc's *Trio for Piano, Bassoon, and Oboe*, *Cello Sonata* first movement, *Le bal masqué*, and the corresponding *Capriccio d'après Le bal masqué*) and even though this is outside the scope of this DMA document, it would be interesting to determine if these rhythmic motives played a role

[80] Daniel, 137-138.

in Poulenc's compositional process and were not merely coincidental. Intense rhythmic drive occurs frequently and can be seen in pieces such as the *Sonata for Four Hands* first movement or the *Sonata for Two Pianos* second movement.

It is in melodies that Poulenc excelled, creating a seemingly endless supply of them. These melodies, diatonic and gently seasoned with chromaticism, create the work's narrative structure and are used to assemble the form, whether rondo, ternary, or another freer form. It is apt to compare Schubert to Poulenc in their dedication to writing art songs and in the incredible inventiveness and naturalness of their melodies. Phrases are typically symmetrical and come in the standard classical lengths of 2, 4, 8, or 16 measures: this regularity is oftentimes broken by the addition of a new meter or the lengthening or shortening of a phrase length[81] (a good example of this can be found in the first song from the *Chansons gaillardes*).

[81] Daniel, 146.

Pedagogical Considerations

Collaborative Effect

Collaborating as a piano duo requires a different set of skills and mindset from solo performance. While a superb pianistic technique and artistry is required for both, collaborative playing is uniquely situated to address issues that solo playing might not focus on. Collaborating not only improves the listening skills of a student, but also makes them more aware of tonal production, broadens their musical sensibilities through pairing with an advanced partner, and betters their experiences emotionally when performing in public. There are four general areas specifically related to collaboration that are good to look at more closely: listening and consensus in interpretation; cuing; balance and voicing of textures; and, melody and phrasing.

Listening and Consensus

Listening is of utmost importance along with a mindset of cooperation. The two pianists should sound as well-balanced and together as any solo pianist's left and right hands — combining the two individuals into one interpretation. As a group, the principal parts must be projected, using the others as support, attuning to the other pianist and ideally listening and reacting only to them. Cooperating and negotiating throughout the rehearsal period in order to achieve a consensus of interpretation will make performances easier and more natural. This interpretation must stem from a formal analysis of the piece (understanding its larger sections, phrase lengths, and climaxes) as well as the piece's moods, translations of performance directions when necessary, and translations into sound of the musical markings and articulations. Important to note here is the particular problem of pedaling in the two piano repertoire: each

performer must know the harmonies and possible counterpoint interaction that each part has with the other so as to avoid incorrect and tasteless pedaling — listening to each other is once again the most important skill that each pianist must obtain.

Cuing

Pianists are not taught how to cue in solo lessons and due to time constraints are not often taught collaborative skills. Cuing is vital not only at the beginning of each piece but also at important structural moments like *subito* tempo changes, long or short pauses, or moments of rubato and flexibility. Pianists can learn much from watching players in a string quartet interacting with each other. When the first violinist cues, he uses the end of his violin in combination with his head movement, eyes, breath, and movement of the bow to create clarity of tempo and interpretation between the other players. In a similar manner, there are four generalized ways to cue as pianists (these must not be used only separately, but students should be encouraged to cue in multiple ways at the same time): head movement, hand movement, eye contact on physical motion, and breathing.

Head and hand movements are important and reliable ways to cue as pianists. There are two general motions that convey the most information: upward and downward motion. The upward swing is the upbeat or preparation, and the downward swing specifies the ictus (the exact moment the beat occurs) or the moment when the music begins. Though experimentation may be done with side-to-side head or hand motion to model conductor beat patterns (such as a 4/4 downward-left-right-upward gesture), this is not typically done. The speed with which the motion is taken determines the pulse, and steady motions should always be used. In cuing, use of neutral-affect motions (smaller motions produced without emotional meaning that are used to

solely convey pulse) may be used to establish a tempo before the start of a difficult piece (such as in the *Sonata for Two Pianos* fourth movement): this allows the performers the comfort of knowing the pulse before the actual cue.

Just as string players can watch the movement of the bow across the strings to determine the exact sounding moment of their partner's instrument, pianists can use eye contact with the physical movement of the keys, pedals, and fingers to determine their partner's intentions. When used alone, this cuing is both the most ambiguous and the most risky; however, when the artistic vision between the performers is aligned, this cue (absent other kinds of cues) can help to create a more emotionally-compelling performance especially in the softest or most peaceful playing.

Breathing is perhaps the most vital type of cue; when used properly and in conjunction with head or hand movement, a breathing cue can create a sense of inevitability in the pulse, something that should be felt in every good cue. The inward and outward breaths correspond to the upward and downward motions of the head and hands. If overused, loud breathing cues can become a distraction for the audience. Because of this, the performers should be aware of how loud their breathing is, determining the extent that is necessary to convey the cue without exaggerating.

In any of these cues, strong and clear intention of tone quality and expression are key. In order to achieve this, the cuing pianist should feel deeply the pulse as well as the emotional qualities of the music before starting the cue (at the start of a piece, counting off the beginning in one's head is helpful). Like everything else in music, practicing is most important in achieving consistently reliable cues between pianists.

Balance and voicing

Balance and voicing will enliven this music more than anything else. To avoid "chunkiness" or overwhelming sonority, the pianist must fully understand the role of texture, harmony, and melody in each portion of the pieces. When a pianist's part is solely harmonic and textural, he must use these in matching the thematic material of the other piano. Poulenc's *Élégie for Two Pianos* provides a wonderful example of the importance of balance: the constantly alternating thick chords can create a wall of sound and choppiness in the melodic line if balanced insensitively (a most ideal illustration of this voicing can be heard on Pascal Rogé and Jean-Philippe Collard's recording of this piece for the music label Decca).

Melody and Phrasing

Poulenc's two-piano repertoire contains frequent alternation of melodic and accompanimental roles between the two pianos. In general, pianists assume that the first piano is more important than the second, due to the prevalence (particularly in four-hand playing) of the first part playing the melody and the second part supporting the melody; however, in Poulenc's repertoire, the pianos play almost equal roles. Often in the middle of a phrase, the pianos will each present sections of the melody and texture. This technique of Poulenc's can create issues to correct, mainly in achieving a homogeneous sound throughout phrases using voicing, and in avoiding any choppiness that might distract the audience from hearing long lines. In order to do these two things well, the most important collaborative skills of listening and matching must be fully developed as a duo. The key to maintaining long lines is to listen to the very ends of phrases in each piano part, taking care to "hand off" the phrase to the other pianist in a musically sensible way.

These skills (the ability to hear and the ability to create desired tone consistently), are vital to any pianist who aspires to artistry: though they can be developed in solo playing, these can be most effectively addressed in collaboration. Poulenc's variety of collaborative demands in his two-piano repertoire as well as the accessibility of certain pieces in terms of difficulty (such as the *Sonata for Four Hands* and *L'embarquement pour Cythère*) makes his music perfectly suited for the task of teaching these skills.

Performance Practice

Luckily, in Poulenc research, there is a great body of literature which Poulenc wrote himself, in his letters, articles, numerous books, interviews with Claude Rostand, as well as firsthand accounts from those who were closest to him, particularly Pierre Bernac's writings on Poulenc and his song literature. All of this along with priceless recordings of Poulenc himself at the piano can help to provide insight into how he envisioned his music in performance. The pianos that Poulenc would have played on would have no significant difference from pianos of today (unlike with Mozart, Beethoven, or even as late as Chopin) and therefore, comments on the execution of pianistic techniques must be taken seriously. In general, all that Poulenc writes about how his music (particularly piano writing) should be played must be taken in good taste and without too much zeal or literalism. This is where recordings of the composer can illuminate how sensitive in technical and musical terms a performance of this music must be.

Pierre Bernac (singer in a long-established duo with Poulenc) noticed that Poulenc's touch when he was accompanying a song was "with a fullness and a superb quality of tone which, when appropriate, could be suddenly percussive."[82] Physiologically, Poulenc had advantages: a

[82] Bernac, 44.

large, thickly built hand, big enough to stretch a tenth at the keyboard with ease.[83] Though there is good association of Poulenc with the music of Mozart, his music requires this deep, "padded" touch, rather than a shallow or sentimental sound that is sometimes incorrectly associated with Mozart's piano music. In addition, a variety of touch, including percussiveness, can be used with great advantage to the music.

When it came to notation, Poulenc was incredibly detailed with his scores, exact with note and rest values, tempo markings, and performance directions (written in French). Feeling the lengths of phrases and a sense of breath between them is very important, as Bernac describes Poulenc: "His harmonic instinct, his feeling for breaths, and not only in his own music, was irreplaceable."[84] The exactness of everything in Poulenc's score must be seriously attempted and given careful thought; this is not to diminish the role of an artist, but rather to advise that simplicity in viewing the score is preferable to too much "interpretation" in this music.

Rhythms, though simple, should be played clearly without too much fluctuation. Poulenc said in an interview with Claude Rostand that, "I hate rubato (as far as my own music's concerned, that is). Once a tempo is set, it must on no account be changed until I indicate the fact. Never extend or shorten a note value. That drives me mad. I prefer all the wrong notes in the world."[85] And again concerning his *Concerto for Two Pianos*, Poulenc states: "No, this work poses no particular aesthetic problem. But if you… play with rubato… then it falls apart. Whatever you do, don't play it rhapsodically! It's much more tightly constructed than you might think."[86] In Poulenc's music, tempo should remain steady; even if there is a sudden change in

---

[83] Bernac, 29-30.
[84] Ibid., 44.
[85] Southon and Nichols, 193.
[86] Ibid., 219.

harmony or dynamic, only a breath should be used to show this.[87] Metronome markings are almost non-negotiable: they must be seen as Poulenc's final word on the subject of tempo and taken literally. He said himself that, "If pianists trusted my metronome markings, which have been calibrated very carefully, then many calamities would be avoided."[88] Though Bernac agrees, he states that there is perhaps more room in tempo than Poulenc made it appear: "Poulenc himself, in the course of our long association, varied his tempi slightly. He played more quickly (too quickly, in my opinion) in his youth than in his maturity."[89]

Pedaling was a specialty of Poulenc's, who learned this from his teacher Ricardo Viñes, whose "technique allowed him to play clearly amid a welter of pedal, which seems like a paradox."[90] By his own admission, this background of admiration for Viñes resulted in Poulenc's extensive use of the pedal, even stating that "The pedal can never be used enough, do you hear! Never enough! Never enough! Sometimes when I hear certain pianists playing my music, I want to shout at them: 'Put some butter in the sauce! What's this diet you're on!'"[91] There are frequent places in Poulenc's piano music where he calls for shrouds of pedal producing a shimmering effect of harmonies: this is not only appropriate but also required despite the neoclassical sensibilities of his music.

Finally, the most important aspect when interpreting Poulenc's music is to maintain good taste. In general, simplicity works significantly better than overt emotionalism. Bernac best sums this up in the following quote:

> His art is an art of <u>suggestion</u>. I <u>beg</u> the interpreters never, figuratively speaking, to hold out their hand to their audience. They must always stay within the limits of a classical style, as far from coldness as from exaggeration. If, at times, one must suggest a type of

---

[87] Bernac, 45.
[88] Southon and Nichols, 194.
[89] Bernac, 45.
[90] Southon and Nichols, 193.
[91] Ibid., 193.

> popular song, the *mélodies* of Poulenc are never popular songs. If one needs to suggest a certain vulgarity, it must never be vulgar. Even the irony and the drollery must never go beyond suggestion. There must always be a dignity, a distinction, which must never be abandoned. There is great subtlety in all this, to which I shall return, while doing all I can to incite the interpreters to remain within the limits of good taste, to keep the restraint which Poulenc never lost.[92]

The best advice in the end is what Poulenc himself advises: "The technical side must be perfected with cold precision, then, sure of oneself, one should forget everything and give an impression of improvising, listening only to one's instinct."[93]

[92] Bernac, 48-49.
[93] Ibid., 49.

Analyses of Works for Two Pianos (and Four Hands)

Though Poulenc is known to have despised detailed theoretical analyses ("Music is a mystery, not to be taken apart . . . analyzing absolutely negates the music"[94]), for the purposes of this paper, we will analyze in order to explicate the form of the pieces and to convey the prominent musical or technical ideas to those intending to study this repertoire. It is important to note that the *Concerto for Two Pianos* will be treated as a concerto instead of as a part of the piano duo repertoire of Poulenc.

The total literature of Poulenc's two-piano music is satisfyingly concise, consisting of five works unevenly spanning most of his compositional career. They show the development of the composer across his stylistic periods and are serious additions to any piano duo's repertoire. Most of these pieces are short (less than seven minutes) with the exception of the great *Sonata for Two Pianos*. There are a number of piano duos who deserve special note for their recorded performances of this repertoire, especially Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale (friends of Poulenc and the dedicatee of his *Sonata for Two Pianos*), Jacques Février and Gabriel Tacchino (Février was a close friend and duo partner of Poulenc, and Tacchino was a piano student of both Février and Poulenc), as well as Pascal Rogé and Jean-Philippe Collard (great modern interpreters of French piano music). These performers are special in their personal relations with Poulenc (Gold, Fizdale, Fevrier, and Tacchino) and in their stylistic similarities to Poulenc's performance practice instructions (Rogé and Collard).

---

[94] Daniel, 196.

Sonata for Four Hands (1918)

As Poulenc's first attempt at writing music for piano duet or duo, this Sonata has remained the most popular and most approachable of any of his two-piano repertoire. It is concise, consisting of three short movements, full of youthful brashness, character, and the charm with which Poulenc's music is associated. It was composed at an elementary school in Saint-Martin-sur-le-Pré alongside his *Mouvements perpétuels* while he was serving in the French army during World War I and was revised in 1939.[95] It is firmly in the early "Fauve" period of Poulenc's musical development; having not yet studied with theorist Charles Koechlin, Poulenc makes effective use of rudimentary techniques and forms, such as extensive use of repetition and cellular structures, and ternary form. Throughout all the movements, the two pianists serve slightly different functions, the first piano taking most of the thematic material, with the second piano typically assuming the role of texture in the form of ostinati and repetitive motives.

Having grown up with the music of Stravinsky and Satie surrounding him, their influence abounds in this Sonata. The first movement titled "Prélude" is in a ternary form with a short codetta (A-B-A-codetta — see Figure A for general analysis) and opens with striking cluster chords that are reminiscent of Stravinsky's *Le sacre du printemps*. These form a rhythmic ostinato in the second piano that lasts from measure 1 until measure 23, before it is interrupted by *subito* trilling gestures leading into the B-section. Cellular structures form an important part in the formation of the melodies in this movement (see exact repetitions of thematic material in the first piano in measure 5, measures 12-13, measure 17, measures 26-29, measures 30-33, measures 41-44 in both pianos, and so on). These repetitions help to keep the phrase lengths from becoming too regular, especially in the addition of a measure of material (as in measures 13, 25, 36 and their equivalents in the return of the A-section). There are three distinct rhythmic and

[95] Nelson, 154-155.

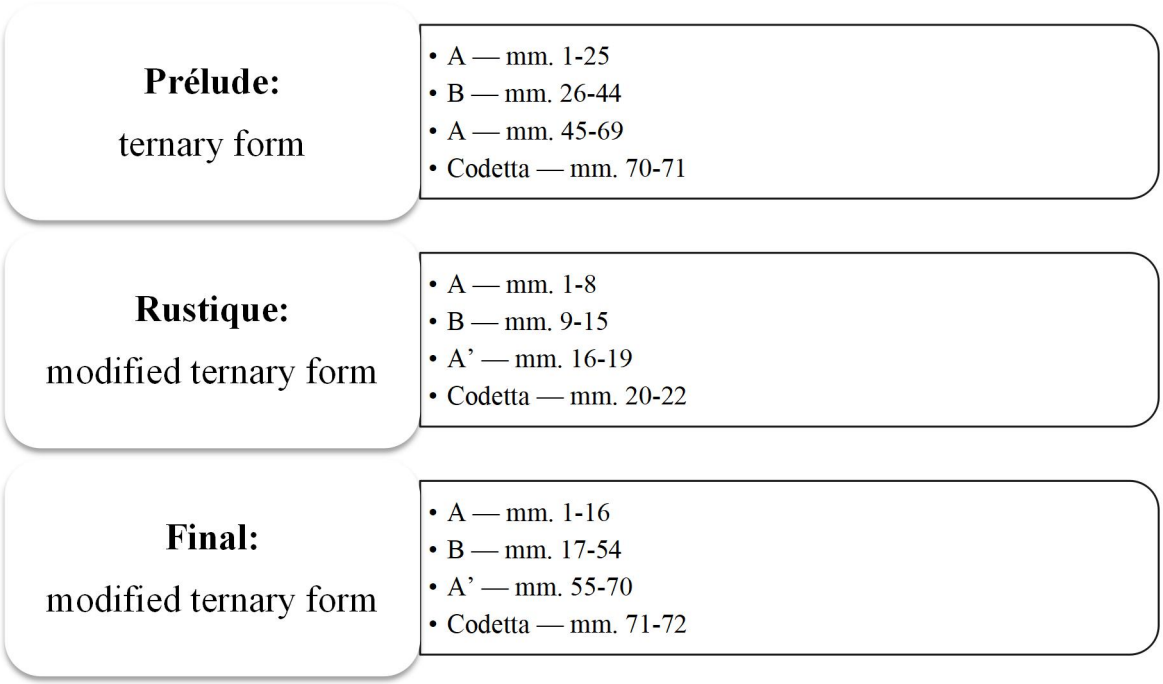
melodic ostinati that gradually accelerate in the B-section that establish structure, the first ostinato in the left hand of the first piano (mm. 26-33), the second in the second piano (mm. 37-40), and the third found in both pianos (mm. 41-44) before a pause and reestablishment of the original tempo in the return of the A-section. This last section is a direct repeat of the first twenty-five measures except with a long pause before the codetta, a short two-measure long *Presto* finishing the movement with suddenly *fortissimo* dissonant clusters.

The second movement, *Rustique*, is reminiscent of Satie in the clarity of its textures and simplicity of the melody. The inscription at the start of the movement "Naïf et lent" ("Naive and slow") reminds the performer as to the childlike nature of this music, an aesthetic that Satie would espouse. As in the first movement, cellular structures abound and ostinati, both rhythmic and melodic are controlled in the second piano part. The melodies are pentatonic and diatonic in nature. The form is modified ternary form (A-B-A'-codetta), in which the return of the A-section is merely embellished differently in the first piano part. The three-measure codetta is as jarring as the first movement's, with a *subito fortissimo* followed by a *subito pianissimo*.

The final movement, *Final*, is a witty combination of the preceding two movements, though so well-composed as to elude the listener through its addition of new themes and ostinati. Its form is once again modified ternary (A-B-A'-codetta) and consists of many strung together "cells" of one to two measures. The first A-section consists of all new material, the theme of which consists of the first two measures. The phrases are completely regular except at the very end of the A-section through the addition of measure 16, an almost direct quote of the final measure of the second movement. The B-section starts with the same rhythmic ostinato from the beginning of the first movement, this time juxtaposed with the theme of the *Final* transposed first to the mixolydian mode and then in measure 25 to the Lydian mode. Measures 27-30 contain a

direct quote from the first movement, measures 37-40, paired with the *Finals*' theme this time in a parallel minor transposition. Measures 31-34 in the second piano correspond with the first movement's ostinato in measures 41-44; and in the first piano, measures 31-32 and 33-34 correspond with the second movement measures 9-10, the left-hand part and the right-hand part respectively. Measures 35-36 are a quote from the first movement, measures 45-46. From here, measures 37-49 grow gradually from triple *pianissimo* to *fortissimo* while continually transposing the theme from measures 1-2 by thirds. The last quote of this movement comes in measures 51-54 where Poulenc augments and repeats the second half of measure 1 in the second movement over the rhythmic ostinato of the beginning of the first movement. The codetta ends strikingly in a triple *pianissimo* with a cluster chord.

Figure 3 – Analysis: *Sonata for Four Hands* [96]



[96] Francis Poulenc, *Francis Poulenc: Sonata for Four Hands* (London: Chester Music, 1990).

L'embarquement pour Cythère: Valse-Musette for Two Pianos (1951)

This piece is an incredibly charming work, written thirty-three years after the *Sonata for Four Hands*. In its simplicity and child-like gaiety, *L'embarquement* has a direct connection to painter Raoul Dufy: Poulenc himself admitted to Claude Rostand that this work was the "most Dufyesque" of his music.[97] This two-piano music recalls the fond memories of Poulenc's childhood visits to the Nogent-sur-Marne, a commune by the river Marne in France[98] (see *Figure 4* for a painting of this river by Dufy). The title of the piece comes from the famous artwork *L'embarquement pour Cythère* (1717) by Jean-Antoine Watteau, [99] a painting that also inspired Debussy's solo piano masterpiece *L'isle joyeuse* (1904) almost fifty years prior.

Figure 4 – Raoul Dufy's Painting: *Nogent-sur-Marne* (1934)

[97] Southon and Nichols, 270-271.
[98] Daniel, 350.
[99] Coincidentally, Watteau was also originally from Nogent-sur Marne.

Figure 5 – Jean-Antoine Watteau's Painting: *L'embarquement pour Cythère* (1717)

Poulenc wrote as the piece's dedication, "to Henri Lavorelle,[100] this evocation of the shores of the Marne, very dear to my childhood."[101] As can be noticed in its title, the piece is a *Valse-Musette* (or waltz) in rondo form, lasting little more than two minutes. Its triple meter is felt within a larger one-measure pulse, and the phrasing is ceaselessly regular until the coda, every eight measures completing a small phrase. It is important for performers to feel this regularity in the phrase structure so that the piece flows forward with a long line, not being interrupted with rubato or choppiness. Unlike more adventurous rondos utilizing numerous large sections, this rondo has only two main musical sections (the A and B-sections which vary harmonically, melodically, and texturally at each subsequent appearance) followed by a short coda. Harmonically, modulations to the third or sixth of a scale is the prevailing pattern

[100] Henri Lavorelle was the director of *Le Voyage en Amérique*, a film about a French couple traveling to America, in which *L'embarquement* features as incidental music.

[101] Nelson, 159.

(modulating from the key of E^{b} major to G or C major; G major to B^{b} major; B^{b} major to D or D^{b} major; C major to E or E^{b} major). The only modulation to a minor key occurs near the end of the piece and serves to emphasize the oddity of a shortened six-measure phrase leading into the coda (mm. 137-142).

The first A-section's structure is a period (mm. 1-16), with the first piano playing the melody during the antecedent phrase and the second piano taking over the melody during the consequent phrase. The following B-section (mm. 17-48) consists of two sixteen-measure halves (mm. 17-32, and 33-48). Each half uses the same thematic material but modulates to different keys, first to D major (m. 29) and then to a *subito fortissimo* in D^{b} major (m. 41) before moving back to the tonic of E^{b} major and the repeat of the A-section. There are distinctive moments of dissonance (mm. 31-32 and again in mm. 47-48) juxtaposed amidst the traditional tonality; this compositional technique is a defining feature in many of Poulenc's works and should be brought out (as the composer notates on the score: "*en dehors*"). In measures 49-64, the repeated A-section adds more right-hand chords in the first piano and changes the dynamics of the melody from *forte* to *mezzo forte*. Because the piece is repetitive in its themes, performers should look for small details that are changed or omitted from each repeated section and should exaggerate these details to make them obvious for an audience. The B'-section (mm. 65-80) is shortened to just a half of the original B-section, a surprise in the structure, and is transposed to G major modulating to B^{b} major. Back to the A'-section, the music presents the quietest and lightest iteration of this section, starting *piano* with the marking "*léger*" or "lightly" in the score. The melody and the bass are doubled now, creating intensity and further highlighting the extremities from the waltz rhythm. The B''-section is a freer variation on a transposed B-theme (this time to C major), introducing appoggiaturas and changed rhythms with the same underlying harmonic

structure. However, in measures 120-128, the structure breaks with new material emphasizing B^{b} major, acting as a dominant towards the final A-section in E^{b} major. After a grand pause in measure 128, the music resumes like normal, except this time in the A''-section, the consequent phrase of the period (mm. 137-142) transforms unexpectedly in the key of E^{b} minor, and finishes two measures early, eliding into the coda. The coda alternates between two characters, a hovering and timeless wash of sound emphasized by a pedal point on E^{b} (mm. 143-150 and mm. 159-168) and the *scherzando* waltz (mm. 151-158 and mm. 170-172).

Like the *Sonata for Four Hands*, *L'embarquement pour Cythère* is an approachable work even by younger students, due to its small structure and lack of technical demands. Poulenc's pedal technique and sense of rhythm is very important in this piece, as he calls repeatedly in the score for a lack of rubato ("*sans aucun rubato*") and shades of pedal (from no pedal with a dry touch in measure 1, to a very blurred pedal, "*très estompé*" in measure 159).

Figure 6 – Analysis: *L'embarquement pour Cythère* [102]

Rondo Form

• A — mm. 1-16	| E^{b} major
• B — mm. 17-48	| B^{b} major
• A — mm. 49-64	| E^{b} major
• B'— mm. 65-80	| G major - B^{b} major
• A' — mm. 81-96	| E^{b} major
• B" — mm. 97-128	| C major - E^{b} major
• A" — mm. 129-143	| E^{b} major - E^{b} minor
• Coda — mm. 143-171	| E^{b} major

[102] Francis Poulenc, *L'Embarquement pour Cythère: Valse-Musette pour deux pianos* (Paris: Editions Max Eschig, 1952).

Capriccio for Two Pianos (1952)

In 1932, Poulenc completed his "profane cantata" ("*cantate profane*") *Le bal masqué*, a six movement, large-scale chamber composition that uses the text of various poems from poetry collection *Le Laboratoire central* (1921) by French surrealist poet Max Jacob.[103] According to biographer Benjamin Ivry, *Le Laboratoire central* and the poems in *Le bal masqué* concern "the joys and terrors of French daily life."[104] The instrumentation consists of a singer (baritone or mezzo-soprano) and a chamber ensemble reminiscent of Schoenberg's Pierrot ensemble: oboe, clarinet, bassoon, cornet, percussion, piano, violin, and cello. At the same time in 1932, Poulenc transcribed and published a solo piano transcription of the finale of the work, calling it *Caprice (d'après le final du Bal masqué)*. This *Caprice* is very close to the original work, adding no new material, but reinterpreting textures and melodies to work better with the solo pianist. In 1952, Poulenc returned to this *Finale,* transcribed it once more – this time for two pianos, and dedicated it to American composer Samuel Barber in return for Barber's earlier dedication of the *Mélodies passagères*.[105] This piece, the *Capriccio for Two Pianos*, is one of the most difficult pieces of Poulenc's two-piano repertoire. It is different both from the original *Finale* and the *Caprice* for solo piano in its inclusion of an eight-measure introduction, newly composed transitional material, many thickened textures, and differently emphasized voices.

Deriving inspiration from the surrealist aesthetic, *Le bal masqué* uses disjunct and frequently bizarre juxtapositions of moods and thematic material to create its form. It is due to this unpredictability that the *Capriccio* has no standard form and is through-composed of several themes linked with transitional material. Seemingly random quotations of classical literature

---

[103] Caroline Ehman, "From the Banal to the Surreal: Poulenc, Jacob, and "Le bal masqué" (dissertation, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2005), https://search.proquest.com/docview/305372124?pq-origsite=primo, 17-18.

[104] Benjamin Ivry, *Francis Poulenc* (London: Phaidon, 1996), 74.

[105] Southon and Nichols, 49.

(such as from Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Nutcracker* or last movement of Mozart's Piano Sonata K. 331 "Rondo Alla Turca") make appearances throughout, serving to help break down the distinctions between popular and "high" art.[106]

As with any transcription of orchestral or song literature, it is important to note how the two-piano reduction accounts for the absence of the baritone as well as other instrumental textures. The pianists should look for varieties in tone quality and touch (both in speed and manner of articulation into the keyboard) in order to differentiate voices and textures. Perhaps most helpful is a knowledge of the form of the piece, in order to present it in a thoughtful and unified manner.

One can divide the Capriccio into two large sections: an instrumental preface (mm. 1-159) and a vocal finale (mm. 160-246). Fast scalar passages, a two-hand tremolo, and an arpeggio with rapid consecutive tritones between pianos provide the most technical difficulty throughout this section. After a short Introduction featuring the first two measures of the first movement of *Le bal masqué* (see Example 2), three main themes alternate throughout the instrumental preface, occasionally in transposition or variation. Theme 1 in C major is full of irrepressible energy and is derived from rehearsal number 1 of the first movement of *Le bal masqué* (see Example 3 also with the resemblance to the opening of the *Final* of the *Sonata for Four Hands*). Transitional material into a repeat of Theme 1 is closely related to rehearsal number 37 in the third movement of *Le bal masqué* (see Example 4). Appearing now transposed to Eb major, Theme 1 appears again as a false entry that quickly melts into the transition to Theme 2, a transition that Caroline Ehman states is related in figuration to Mozart's "Rondo Alla Turca."[107] In another classical music allusion, Theme 2 quotes the "Waltz of the Snowflakes" from Tchaikovsky's *The*

---

[106] Caroline Ehman, "From the Banal to the Surreal: Poulenc, Jacob, and "Le bal masqué," 68-73.
[107] Ehman, 73.

Nutcracker.[108] A transition into Theme 3 features two juxtaposed and disparate musical elements: a rowdy four-measure folk-like theme followed by a melismatic, legato melody reminiscent of Chopin. Theme 3 comes from the second movement of *Le bal masqué* at rehearsal number 20 (see Example 5). After repeats of both Themes 1 and 2, there is a twelve-measure transition into the *Mouvement de Tango*: this transition features bell-like sonorities, a sound featuring importantly in both the *Sonata for Two Pianos* and the *Élégie*. Throughout the *Tango*, a gently rocking ostinato accompanies winding melodies: a particularly soulful line in measures 146-147 is a quote from the third movement of *Le bal masqué* at rehearsal number 31 (see Example 6). At the end of the *Tango*, a *Quasi cadenza* with a very direct and free melody (played by the cornet in the full score) lasts three measures followed by newly composed transitional material leading to the next large section: the vocal finale.

In the vocal finale, the voice of the baritone singing the poetry (with a mixture of humor and irony) is replaced with a full, padded tone marked mostly in the score with *fortissimos* and accents. Fast repeated chords (starting in *Tempo I* at measure 160), chromatic double-fourths, and left-hand jumps provide the most technical difficulty in this section of the piece. Change of mood happens quickly and often. In the Coda of the piece, an important vocal technique of falsetto (measures 241-243 in the second piano of the *Capriccio*) is used humorously as the words "son nid" are repeated excessively till the end: this dramatic change of color in the voice can be achieved in the piano through Poulenc's directive of *subito pianissimo*.

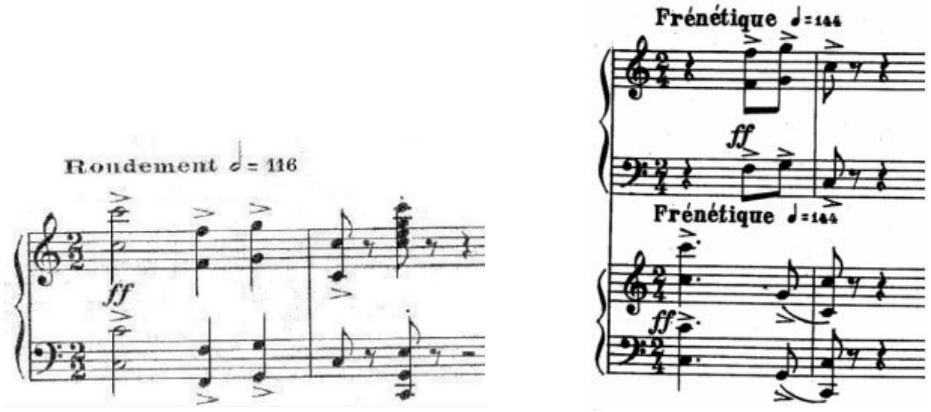
Though difficult, the *Capriccio for Two Pianos* is a wonderful work that can stand alone from *Le bal masqué* despite being a transcription. Unfortunately, it has suffered from a lack of inclusion on piano recitals in comparison to the more famous *Sonata for Four Hands* or

---

[108] Ibid., 68-70.

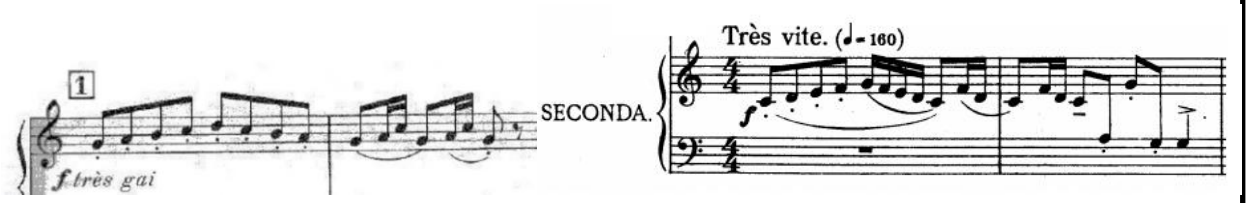
L'embarquement pour Cythère. This piece deserves more attention due to its superb compositional qualities as well as its accessibility with a general audience.

Example 2 – Openings of *Le bal masqué* and *Capriccio*

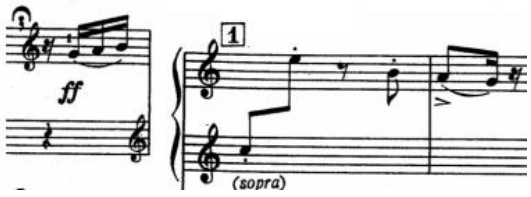


Reduction of full score (first movement mm. 1-2) Capriccio (mm. 1-2)

Example 3 – Comparison of *Capriccio* Theme 1, First Movement, and *Sonata for Four Hands*

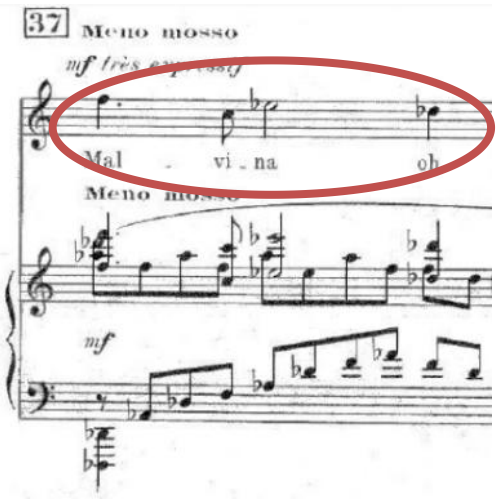


Reduction of *Le bal masqué* (first movement) Opening of *Final* from *Sonata for Four Hands*

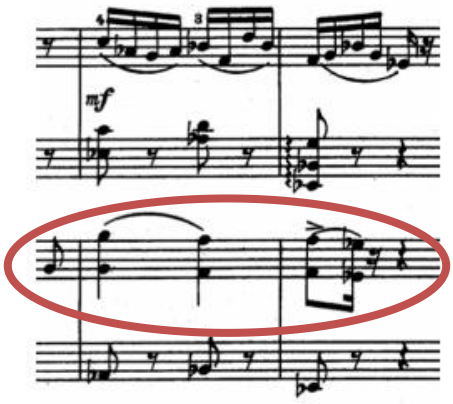


Capriccio excerpt of Theme 1 (mm. 9-11)

Example 4 – *Capriccio* Transition and Third Movement

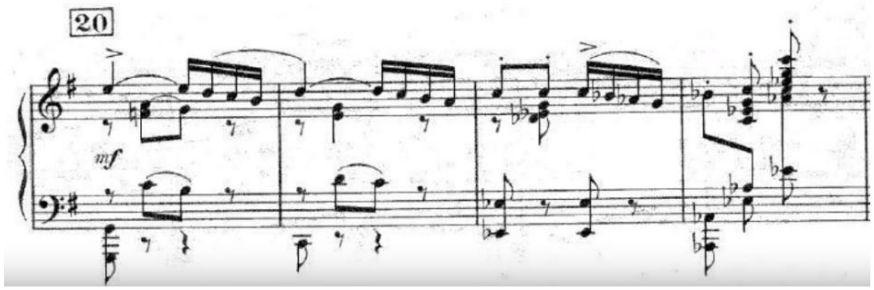


Reduction of full score (Third movement)

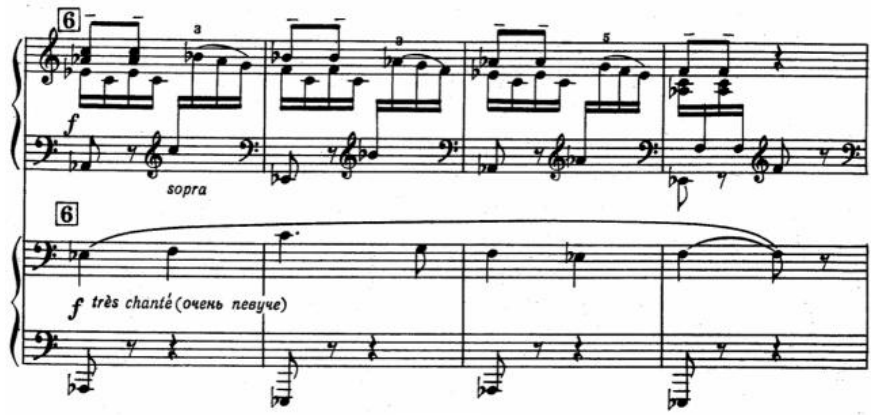


Capriccio transition (mm. 25-27)

Example 5 – *Capriccio* Theme 3 and Second Movement

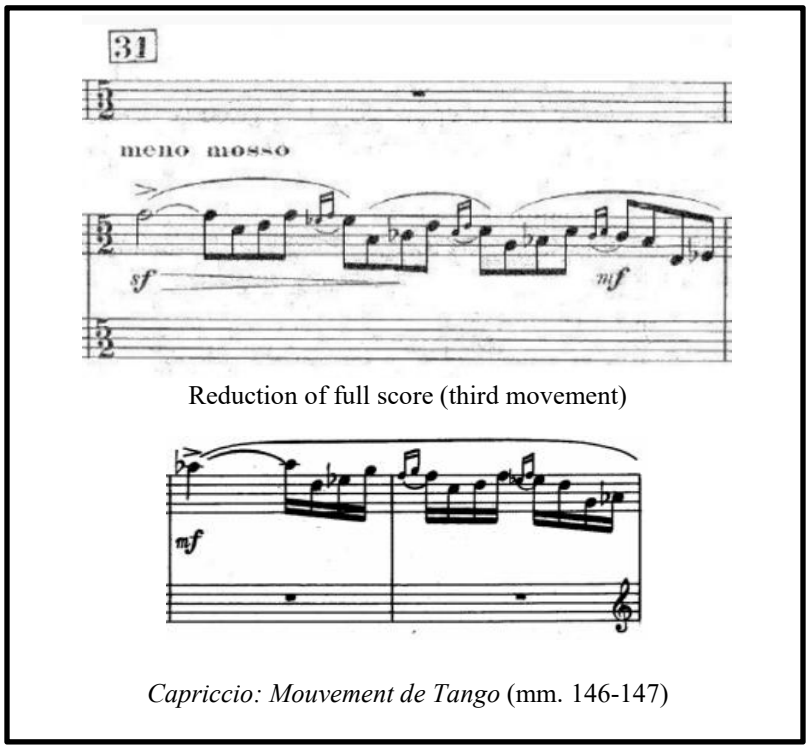


Reduction of full score (second movement)



Capriccio Theme 3 (mm. 79-82)

Example 6 – *Capriccio: Mouvement de Tango* and Third Movement

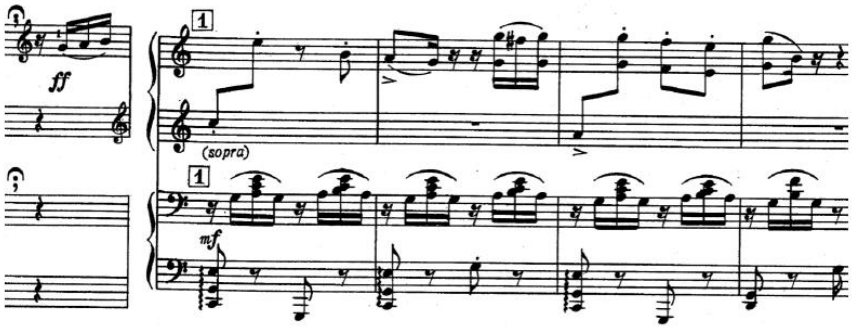


Reduction of full score (third movement)

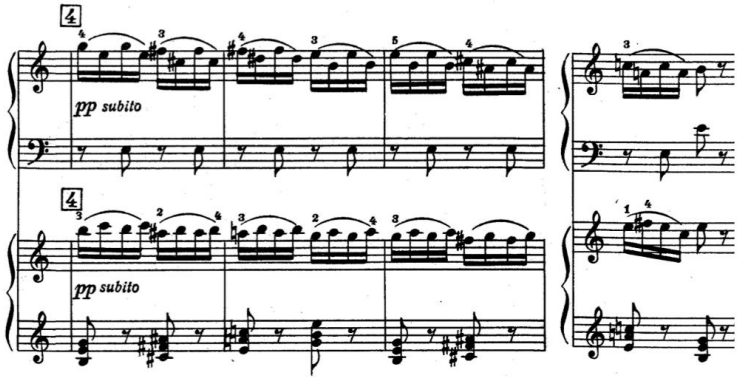
Capriccio: Mouvement de Tango (mm. 146-147)

Figure 7 – Themes from the *Capriccio for Two Pianos*

Theme 1:



Theme 2:



Theme 3:

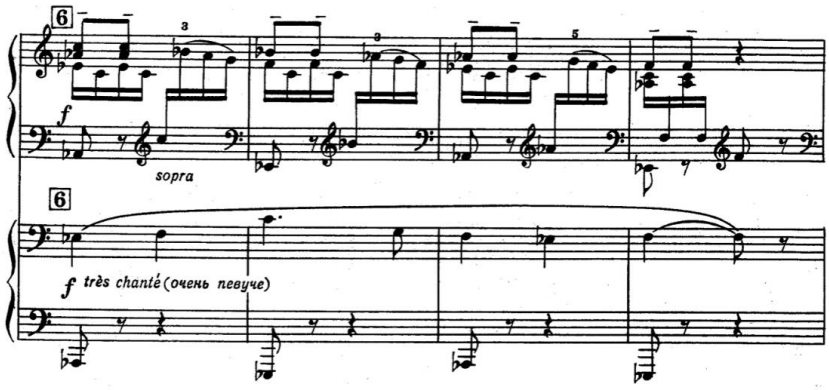


Figure 8 – Analysis: *Capriccio for Two Pianos* [109]

Freely-Composed Form (based on themes)

• Instrumental preface •

- **Introduction** — mm. 1-8
- **Theme 1** — mm. 9-25
  - *transition — mm. 26-33*
- **Theme 1** — mm. 34-39
  - *transition — mm. 40-48*
- **Theme 2** — mm. 49-70
  - *transition — mm. 71-78*
- **Theme 3** — mm. 79-98
  - *transition — mm. 99-104*
- **Theme 2** — mm. 105-110
  - *transition — mm. 111 -114*
- **Theme 1** — mm. 115-122
  - *transition — mm. 123-133*
- **Mouvement de tango** — mm. 134-152
- **Quasi Cadenza** — mm. 153-155
  - *transition — mm. 156-159*

• Vocal finale •

- **Tempo I** — mm. 160-189
  - *transition — mm. 189-192*
- **Meno Mosso** — mm. 193-207
  - *transition — mm. 208-213*
- **Return of Tempo I Theme** — mm. 214-226
- **Coda** — mm. 226-246

[109] Francis Poulenc, *Capriccio d'Apres Le Bal Masque: 2 Pianos Reduction* (Paris: Editions Salabert, 1992).

Sonata for Two Pianos (1953)

Arguably, the *Sonata for Two Pianos* is Poulenc's masterpiece in its genre. Dedicated to piano duo Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale "[w]ith as much friendship as admiration"[110] (Poulenc had come into their acquaintance during a trip to America),[111] this large-scale four-movement sonata is unlike any of the previous three works for two pianos, being deeply serious and composed in the late Poulenc style. It is grandiose in its conception (sometimes even edging into romanticism) and is the longest by far of his two-piano repertoire. Sadly, it has not received as ready of a musical reception as its sibling, the *Sonata for Four Hands*, likely due to the serious nature of the work as well as the difficulties of listening and performance.

> "The first section is not conceived as the first movement of a classic sonata, but as a true *Prologue*. Its second theme, 'animé,' is really only a rhythmic progression designed to reveal the lyric value of the melody… which forms the central portion of the movement."[112] – F. Poulenc

The *Prologue* is set in a loose ternary structure surrounded by an introduction and coda with extended transitional material between the first two sections. The introduction opens with church bells (two different volumes, the quieter keeping a steady heartbeat while the louder introduces the rhythmic motives that will dominate the piece) clanging dissonantly in the uppermost registers of the piano, gradually descending until their arrival into tonality at the A-section (m. 16). This dissonance created by the use of minor seconds and tritones interspersed with perfect fifths and fourths does not start to establish a tonal center until measures 13-16, where the bass notes of the second piano mark out the harmonies of IV-I-V-i, firmly establishing tonic as $C^{\#}$ minor. From here, a towering theme presents itself in octaves continuing the rhythmic motives of the introduction and alternating the melody between pianists. A quick modulation to

---

[110] Nelson, 161.
[111] Benjamin Ivry, 164.
[112] Daniel, 356.

B^{b} minor marks the beginning of what Poulenc called the "second theme," the *animez progressivement*. From here the tempo gradually increases as an unstoppable river of sixteenth notes and buildup of sonority plunges chaotically and unpredictably into a grand pause at the end of measure 62 and a *subito piano* in measure 63. Harmonies again become obscured by the low register and dissonant tremolos of the pianos in the first transition (mm. 63-67). From here emerges the B-section of the movement, a variation of the A-section that is breathless and dream-like. The second transition moves from thick chords (ninths and sevenths) to a jarring *subito forte*, wrenching the listener from their reverie back into an abridged A'-section. Poulenc then uses the second transition once more, shortened and without crescendo. To the listener's surprise, the coda that follows is the same material as the introduction in character and rhythmic motives. As the piece finishes, it quickly decrescendos to a whisper, ending on an implied C$^{\#}$ dominant seventh chord buried in a wash of pedal.

> "The *Allegro molto* is a scherzo whose principal interest resides in the central episode, 'extraordinarily peaceful.'"[113] – F. Poulenc

The second movement, *Allegro Molto*, is in its larger structure a scherzo in ternary form with a short coda. At a more microscopic level, the form is convoluted, with four themes in the A-sections and two in the B-section: these themes are freely transposed, abridged, and varied, sometimes with new material between the sections. All of this can easily result in tedious over-analysis of small changes. Important connections with the *Prologue* are the reminiscence of the introductory bells in the transition to the B-section (mm. 51-54) and the presence of a transposed transition 2 in the e'-section (mm. 91-92). In the A'-section, the b'-section's character is changed from an introverted in measures 17-18 to a brash outburst in measures 109-110. After firmly reestablishing the tonic of a minor in the return of the d'-section, the four-measure coda

---

[113] Ibid., 356.

rousingly finishes with a minor E^b seventh chord moving to A minor at the extremities of the pianos' registers.

> "I began with the *Andante*, for I already knew the general architectural shape of the work. Surrouded by a *Prologue*, an *Allegro molto*, and an *Epilogue*, this *Andante* is, for me, the true center of the work. It is no longer, as in the Andante of the *Concerto pour 2 pianos*, a question of a poetic homage to Mozart… but rather a lyric, profound outpouring. Taking inspiration, moreover, from my choral music, I attempted in several places a great tres doux purity of line – for example, the unison basses in the last measures of the *Andante*."[114] – F. Poulenc

The *Andante Lyrico* is truly the centerpiece of the Sonata as Poulenc intended. Henri Matisse provided great inspiration for this movement in the refinement of strictly essential features. In conversation with Claude Rostand, Poulenc stated:

> "Why, sadly, did I not observe Matisse's lesson over my piano pieces! But in my recent *Sonata for two pianos* the *Andante* is, on the contrary, very spare. It's piano writing without tricks, real piano writing in which each instrument converses in perfect agreement with its partner, without interrupting."[115]

Bells are again important throughout the sonata, majestically ringing in the third movement in introduction for twelve measures. Almost orchestrally, with string pizzicatos in the pianists' left hands and long, legato bowing in the right hands, the transparent A-section repeats the theme twice before introducing a sighing second theme. The B-section builds gradually yet dramatically with octave melodies and then chordal pillars of sound from *pianissimo* to *fff* before collapsing again into a *subito piano*. Two more subitos signal the return of the A-section, one *forte* at the start of measure 80 and a *piano* at the final beat of measure 80. This A'-section is slightly shortened containing only one statement of the first theme followed by the second. The coda is extremely special, with the markings *Très enveloppé de Pédale* ("very enveloped in pedal"), *très doux* ("very soft"), *à peine effleuré* ("barely touched"), and *très lié* ("very linked"): in following each of these instructions, a halo of sound is produced in the second piano; in the

---

[114] Ibid., 356.
[115] Southon and Nichols, 269.

first piano, a melody barely emerges from the texture, with softest counterpoint in the left hand against the right hand. The music closes with a rising arpeggio and the same $C^{\#}$ dominant seventh chord that finished the Prologue, only this time with an added $D^{\#}$ ninth.

> "Properly speaking, the *Epilogue* is not a Finale, but a recapitulation of the other three movements, preceded by a new theme. I would venture to say that the *Concerto pour 2 pianos* is bright and many-colored, while the *Sonate* has the gravity of a string quartet."[116] – F. Poulenc

As Poulenc states above, this final movement is not so much focused on form as it is on thematic material and looking back at the previous movements. The movement introduces new material until measures 18-19, which contains a transposed quote of measures 31-32 of the second movement in the second piano part. Then, in measures 22-26, the second movement (mm. 17-20) is quoted, this time in the sixteenth-note figuration pattern alternating between the right hands of each piano. The brass fanfare in the second piano in measure 27 corresponds by transposition to measure 46 of the second movement. A first movement quotation of measures 63-80 is found in the last movement measures 46-63. In measure 72, the third movement makes its sole contribution, mirroring measure 80 and its long-short-short-long rhythmic pattern. In the *Très exactement le double plus lent* section, harmonies and melody from the second transition in the first movement appear, with flourishes from the second piano climaxing the movement. After a great decrescendo, the Introduction from the *Prologue* reemerges for the last time in *fortissimo* without decrescendo in eight measures landing at a fermata. A two-measure coda finishes the movement with a restatement of the *Epilogue's* main theme and two triple *fortissimo* chords in B^{b} minor, thus providing a rousing close to this brilliant *Sonata*.

---

[116] Ibid., 356.

Figure 9 – Analysis: *Sonata for Two Pianos* [117]

Prologue:
loose ternary structure
3/4 time signature
	• **Introduction** — mm. 1-15
	• **A** — mm. 16-34
	  • ***Animez progressivement*** *— mm. 35-62*
	  • *transition 1 — mm. 63-67*
	• **B** — mm. 68-83
	  • *transition 2 — mm. 84-92*
	• **A'** — mm. 93-102
	  • *transition 2' — mm. 103-107*
	• **Coda** — mm. 108-126

Allegro Molto:
scherzo - ternary form
4/4 time signature
	• **A** — mm. 1-50
	  • a — mm. 1-16
	  • b — mm. 17-27
	  • a' — mm. 27-32
	  • c — mm. 33-45
	  • d — mm. 46-50
	  • *transition — mm. 51-54*
	• **B** — mm. 55-99
	  • e — 55-65
	  • f — 66-90
	  • e' — 91-99
	• **A'** — mm. 100-118
	  • a'' — 100-108
	  • b' — 109-116
	  • d' — 117-118
	• **Coda** — mm. 119-122

Andante Lyrico:
ternary form
3/4 time signature
	• **Introduction** — mm. 1-12
	• **A** — mm. 13-34
	  • Theme 1 — mm. 13-28
	  • Theme 2 — mm. 28-34
	• **B** — mm. 35-80
	  • Theme 3 — mm. 25-67
	  • Theme 4 — mm. 68-80
	• **A'** — mm. 80-94
	  • Theme 1' — mm. 80-88
	  • Theme 2' — mm. 88-94
	• **Coda** — mm. 95-114

Epilogue: Freer form based on thematic material 4/4 time signature	• **Allegro giocoso** — mm. 1-34 • **Eclatant** — mm. 35-45 • **Mouvement exact du prologue** — mm. 46-67 • **Subito tempo allegro gracioso** — mm. 68-94 • **Très exactement le double plus lent** — mm. 95-104 • **Tempo exact du prologue** — mm. 105-112 • **Coda - Tempo I** — mm. 112-114

[117] Francis Poulenc, *Sonate pour deux pianos* (Paris: Editions Max Eschig, 1954).

Élégie (en accords alternés) (1959)

"[Perform it as if] improvising, a cigar between your lips and a glass of cognac on the piano."[118]
– F. Poulenc

At the behest of piano duo Gold and Fizdale, Poulenc wrote his final piano piece, the *Élégie (en accords alternés)* for two pianos, as a tribute to Marie-Blanche de Polignac (an important supporter of art who had passed away in 1958). Benjamin Ivry observes that the opening melody contains a musical parody of the American folk-song "Home on the Range," likely written as "a token of friendship for the American piano duo," and not with any ironic intent.[119] Poulenc also stated that this piece was "very Chabrier."[120]

All throughout, the piece uses an echo effect (*en accords alternés* or "in alternating chords") distributing great spaced out chords staggered between the two pianos (see Example 6). This piece is in ternary form (A-B-A'-Coda) and is considerably simpler both technically and musically compared to the *Capriccio for Two Pianos* or the *Sonata for Two Pianos*. However, this work can be of great use pedagogically, as quality of balance and voicing in the chords and between the pianos is necessary for a good performance. There are few technical demands besides thick chords, octaves, and quick leaps from playing texture on the offbeat to playing melody on the beat (see Example 7): because of the simpler nature of the piece, the pianists can focus on matching sounds in the melody, which frequently moves from one piano to the next. Avoiding choppiness in the long phrases is very important, as the tendency to take time in order to highlight special harmonies can occur too often. The passage of the melody between the pianos should, for the most part, remain unbroken. The B-section marked *Capricioso* should start at a slightly faster tempo, moving towards the repeat of the A-section. This A'-section should

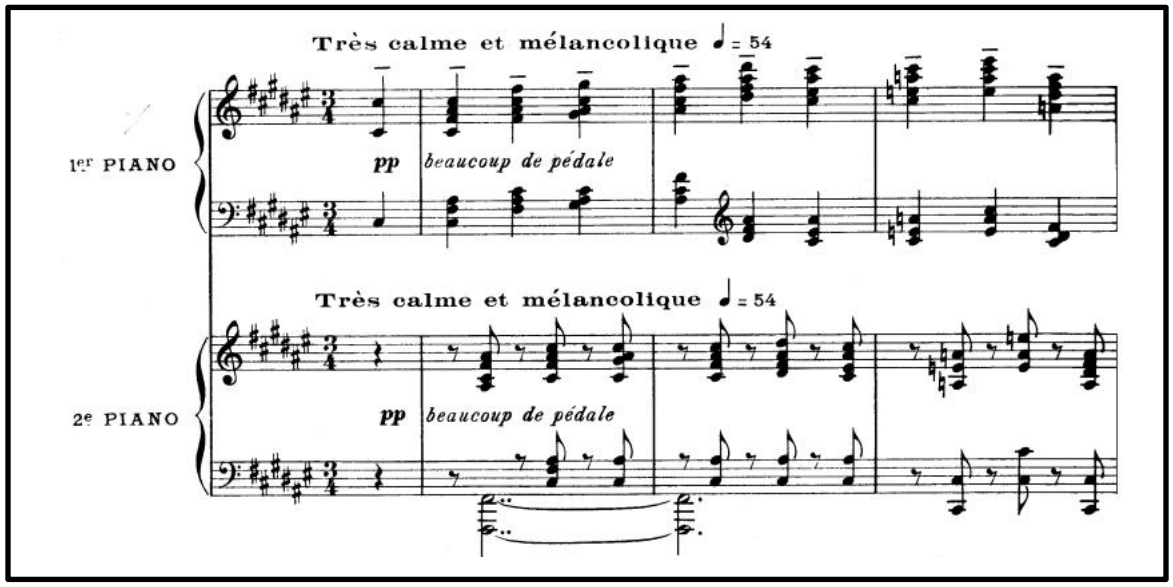
[118] Ivry, 203.
[119] Ibid., 203.
[120] Ibid., 203.

only be a memory of the former A-section, and elegantly and expressively proceed into the coda. Though this piece is emotional, the only real drama in the piece occurs in the second half of the coda, where there is a transformation of the soft, heavenly ascent of a rhythmic motive (short-short-long) in the first piano into an expression of *fortissimo* dissonant horror and bereavement plunging back down to the low registers of the piano (see measures 110-113 in Example 8). In measure 118, the music hesitates, as if unsure of finishing in a minor or major tonality, and finishes on an F# major chord with the fifth ($C^{\#}$) emphasized in the first piano, an emphasis quite similar to the ending of the Kyrie Eleison from Mozart's Requiem Mass (see Example 9).

Figure 10 – Analysis: *Élégie* [121]

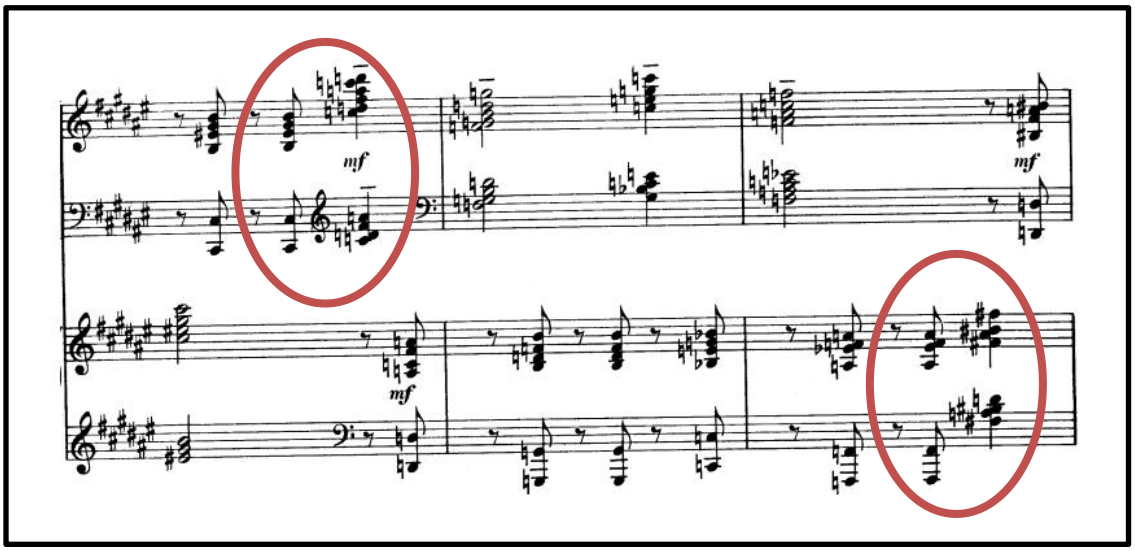
Ternary Form	• **A** — mm. 1-32 • **B** - ***Capricioso*** — mm. 33-92 • **A'** — mm. 93-106 • **Coda** — mm. 107-120

Example 7 – Alternating Chords in *Élégie* (mm. 1-3)

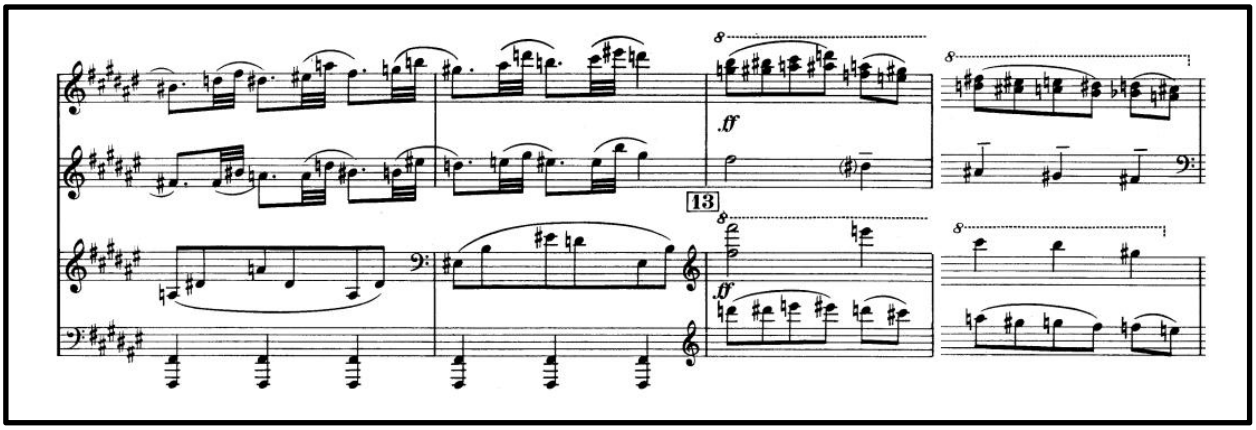


[121] Francis Poulenc, *Élégie pour deux pianos* (Paris: Editions Max Eschig, 1960).

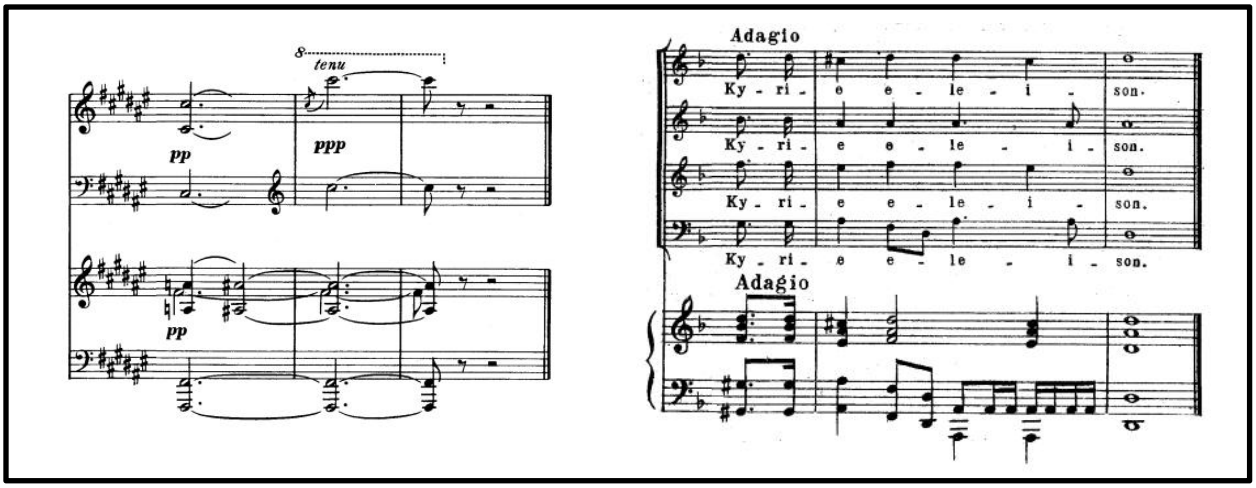
Example 8 – Technical Leaps in *Élégie* (mm. 20-23)



Example 9 – Coda from *Élégie* (mm. 110-113)



Example 10 – Ending Comparison of *Élégie* (mm. 118-120) and Mozart's "Kyrie Eleison"



Conclusion

Francis Poulenc's contributions to the repertoire for two pianos are considerable, his five works including two *Sonatas*, a *Capriccio*, a waltz *L'embarquement pour Cythère,* and an *Élégie*. This repertoire has great pedagogical value in its variety of technical demands (including a scope of difficulty ranging from the easier *Sonata for Four Hands* to the difficult *Sonata for Two Pianos* and *Capriccio*) and the development of ear and musical sensibilities through collaboration. The music has a general audience appeal, due to its traditional harmonic language and popular musical style combined with good emotional taste.

With an informed background on Poulenc's life, compositional and performance style, and specific analyses of each of the pieces, piano duos will be able to present this music as an important addition to their repertoire and further remove from Poulenc the false impression of being a lesser composer. But to those performers whose souls are directly touched by Poulenc's music, the most apt instruction is from the composer: "Above all do not analyse my music — love it!"[122]

[122] Bernac, 13.

Bibliography

Bernac, Pierre. *Francis Poulenc: The Man and His Songs*. Translated by Winifred Radford. New York: W.W. Norton, 1977.

Chimènes, Myriam, and Roger Nichols. "Francis Poulenc." *Grove Music Online*, January 20, 2001. https://doi-org.www2.lib.ku.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.22202.

Chimènes, Myriam and Sidney Buckland. *Francis Poulenc: Music, Art, and Literature*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1999.

Daniel, Keith. "Francis Poulenc: A Study of His Artistic Development and His Musical Style." PhD dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1980. https://search-proquest-com.www2.lib.ku.edu/docview/288052219?pq-origsite=primo.

Ehman, Caroline. "From the Banal to the Surreal: Poulenc, Jacob, and "Le bal masqué." MM thesis, McGill University, 2005. https://search.proquest.com/docview/305372124?pq-origsite=primo.

Elderfield, John. *The "wild beasts": Fauvism and its Affinities.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Hell, Henri. *Francis Poulenc*. New York: Grove Press, 1959.

Ivry, Benjamin. *Francis Poulenc*. London: Phaidon, 1996.

Laufers, Elizabeth. "Francis Poulenc's Use of Counterpoint in Chamber and Piano Music, 1917–1925." MM thesis, University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2004. https://search-proquest-com.www2.lib.ku.edu/docview/305160230/?pq-origsite=primo.

Nelson, Jon. "The Piano Music of Francis Poulenc." PhD dissertation, University of Washington, 1978. https://search-proquest-com.www2.lib.ku.edu/docview/288282652/?pq-origsite=primo.

Poulenc, Francis. *Capriccio d'Apres Le Bal Masque: 2 Pianos Reduction*. Paris: Editions Salabert, 1992.

Poulenc, Francis. *Élégie pour deux pianos*. Paris: Éditions Max Eschig, 1960.

Poulenc, Francis. *Emmanuel Chabrier*. Translated by Cynthia Jolly. London: Dennis Dobson, 1981.

Poulenc, Francis. *L'embarquement pour Cythère: Valse-Musette pour deux pianos*. Paris: Éditions Max Eschig, 1952.

Poulenc, Francis. *Moi Et Mes Amis (My Friends and Myself)*. Translated by James Harding. London: Dennis Dobson, 1963.

Poulenc, Francis. *Francis Poulenc: Sonata for Piano Four Hands*. London: Chester Music, 1990.

Poulenc, Francis. *Sonate pour deux pianos*. Paris: Éditions Max Eschig, 1954.

Rogé, Pascal, and Jean-Phillipe Collard. *Poulenc: Two Piano Music, Violin Sonata, Elegie for Horn.* Recorded on May 5, 1995. Decca Music Group Limited, compact disc.

Roust, Colin. *Georges Auric: A Life in Music and Politics.* New York: Oxford, 2020.

Sie, Renny. "Francis Poulenc's 'Huit Nocturnes' for Piano: A Performer's Guide." DMA thesis, University of Miami, 2013. https://search-proquest-com.www2.lib.ku.edu/docview/1400269075/?pq-origsite=primo.

Southon, Nicolas, and Roger Nichols. *Francis Poulenc: Articles and Interviews: Notes from the Heart*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014.

Weiser, Daniel. "The Visual Stimulus: The Influence of the Visual Arts on the Musical Compositions of Emmanuel Chabrier, Erik Satie, and Francis Poulenc." DMA thesis, Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University, 1998. https://search-proquest-com.www2.lib.ku.edu/docview/304466381/?pq-origsite=primo.